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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of an inquiry conducted to determine whether the Saskatoon schools were providing the kind of school services the community really wanted. The information was obtained by soliciting written briefs from citizens and students, by conducting a random survey, and by holding public meetings throughout the city. The report is comprised of (1) a summary of attitudes expressed by the public on a wide variety of topics related to Saskatoon schools and (2) some observations and 47 recommendations made by the inquiry group. (JF)

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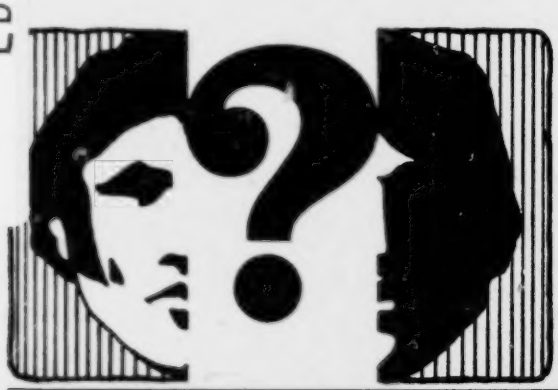

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GREN SMITH-WINDSOR

— SASKATOON, SASK.

CITIZENS' SCHOOL INQUIRY

EA 005 122

"Saskatoon has in the past had a reputation for doing creative things to help meet the educational needs of its children...."

- from a citizen's brief.

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CITIZENS' SCHOOL INQUIRY

— SASKATOON, SASK.

January 24, 1973.

To the sponsors of Citizens' School Inquiry:

Saskatoon Teachers' Association
Saskatoon Separate Board of Education
Saskatoon Public Board of Education

My fellow members of the Inquiry and I are pleased to present the following report which represents the findings and recommendations of the Citizens' School Inquiry.

We thank you for the trust you expressed in granting us complete independence as we carried out this assignment.

Conscious of our limitations as non-professionals in education, we hope that we have fulfilled the mandate that you gave us by honestly and accurately reflecting the opinion of our fellow citizens.

The Inquiry members have considered this a most worthwhile and interesting project and have appreciated the opportunity to serve voluntarily our community in this way.

Yours truly,

E. N. Hughes,
Chairman, Citizens' School Inquiry

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Citizen's School Inquiry was conceived and sponsored by the Saskatoon Public and Separate Boards of Education and the Saskatoon Teachers' Association. Funds were provided by the two boards. The Teachers' Association provided help in setting up equipment for public hearings, taping these sessions and providing such other assistance as the inquiry required from time to time.

The sponsors were prompted to establish the inquiry by the question of whether they were providing the kind of school services that the community really wanted. While the sponsors suggested some broad terms of reference, the inquiry group eventually embodied their objectives in the following sentence: "To determine and assess what the citizens of Saskatoon expect from their elementary and secondary school systems." In order to reach this goal, the inquiry group decided to seek public opinion by soliciting written briefs, conducting a random survey, and holding public meetings throughout the city. Briefs were invited by advertising in the various media, by letters sent to various organizations, and by notices sent home through the schools. In all, about 200 such documents were filed with the inquiry. They ranged in length from submissions of one page to veritable volumes. A significant number of these briefs were from senior students, following a special appeal to them.

Though the members of the inquiry anticipated that a considerable volume of material would be generated by briefs and public meetings, they felt strongly that it was important to reach those persons who would hesitate to write a brief or to appear before a hearing. The inquiry group felt that these people in the community should be provided with a voice in

the deliberations, and that their opinions should be sought out before any public discussion of the issues. In order to reach this grass roots group Market Facts of Canada Limited, a public attitude research firm, was engaged to conduct a study in the City. This firm first held five meetings with representative small groups in order to determine concerns about Saskatoon schools. Reactions were used to design a questionnaire. Following this, 420 persons were interviewed in their homes and asked to respond to 97 statements and answer 6 open-ended questions of a general nature. The open-ended questions involved the participants writing out their generalized views of the system including their likes and dislikes of it, the one best thing about it, and the area requiring greatest improvement.

The inquiry group held a series of seven public meetings which were attended by approximately 1,400 persons. Many of those attending, but by no means all, took part in the discussions which followed the verbal presentation of briefs. The observations of speakers at these meetings were recorded and transcribed.

In summary then, the inquiry had at its disposal 200 written briefs, the report of Market Facts Public Attitude Survey and the transcribed comments made at public meetings. This material was combined to form the basis of this report. Thus, in all, more than 2,000 persons came in direct contact with the inquiry. In addition, some of the briefs submitted were from groups, such as home and school associations and other civic and professional organizations. The members of the inquiry would like to express thanks to those who participated. We hope that we have their messages straight.

To get the messages straight was by no means a simple task and if in some areas of this report there appears to be conflict it does not mean that the inquiry members could not make up their minds but simply that a great divergence of opinion exists among the citizens of this City on the subject.

Further, terminology became a problem in some of the submissions and in some instances it was difficult to tell whether the respondent was referring to elementary or secondary school students. This was particularly difficult to determine in the area of freedom versus discipline and in the amount of student involvement in setting school policies. Indeed, the word discipline itself caused the inquiry members some anxious thoughts; for some respondents discipline appeared to be a trip to the woodshed while for others it meant the capability to deal properly with difficult academic exercises.

Another point that must be noted is that reference to percentages in the public attitude study must be considered approximate, in the sense that they are statistically reliable but not exact.

It must also be noted that some of the more extreme views expressed have not found their way into this report because they appear not to have caught the interest of even a significant minority.

The report which follows is comprised of two major sections. The one immediately following named "Findings" is a summary of attitudes expressed by the public on a wide variety of topics related to Saskatoon schools. These findings are presented largely without comment or opinion. The final section is labelled "Observations and Recommendations". Implicit in our choice of recommendations is our assessment of the Findings.

FINDINGS

A. ENDS AND MEANS

A. ENDS AND MEANS

OBJECTIVES IN EDUCATION

Throughout the proceedings of the inquiry a considerable amount of public interest was focused on the educational aims and objectives of Saskatoon schools, both in the written submissions received by the Committee and in the discussions at public hearings. A further indication of citizen viewpoint in this matter was apparent in the results of the public attitude survey.

Although not directly stressed in all contributions, there was a stated view by some and an inference by many others, that school programs should be equally available for all children and youth of this City, with equally suitable educational facilities and staff. There should be equal educational opportunity regardless of residence, race, or religion, and without restrictions imposed on the basis of any physical handicap or emotional or learning disability.

One Home and School said:

> We believe that equal educational opportunity should be provided all children in the city, regardless of where they live or what their economic circumstances.
>
> This would mean that -
> - all school buildings and facilities should come to a certain minimum standard;
> - resource centres and gymnasiums should be provided all schools;
> - equally qualified teachers and administrators should be found in all schools.

Frequent reference was made to the idea that the school should have as its primary objective the development of the individual student to the maximum of his or her potential. It was made abundantly clear that contributors thought in terms of the development of the capacities of the individual student.

One respondent put it this way:

> Education is the encouragement of the fullest possible development of all the skills latent in an individual and the encouragement of optimal function within society.

The potential that contributors would expect schools to develop lay in three broad areas:

1. The development of skills and knowledge:

Emphasis was placed on the idea that the school program should enable the individual student to develop general competence in communication skills and mathematics. It was felt that students not only should, but must, learn how to communicate their thoughts both orally and in writing, and that in addition, they should understand the basic mathematical concepts and practices.

Next, emphasis was placed by contributors on the development of a wide range of other skills and knowledge. The school program should be broad in content and should encompass a wide variety of subject matter. Such a program should aim to develop all areas of student ability and should enable a student to cope with a rapidly changing society.

2. Development of a motivation to learn and an intellectual strategy:

The school program, it was felt, should encourage in the student a motivation or eagerness to learn. Moreover, it should encourage the student to develop an inquiring mind and a capacity for both creative and critical thought. It should teach the student to learn for himself.

3. The development of social and/or moral attitudes:

Students should develop an understanding of other people, and should learn to respect and value their persons and opinions; they should develop a sense of responsibility for their society. (Contributors would <u>not</u> suggest, we feel, that schools alone are responsible for the development of these attitudes in students but

would suggest that schools play an important role in supporting and accommodating the values learned by the student in his home and in society.)

A few respondents attempted a summary of the objectives of education. As might be imagined there was considerable divergence. One of the submissions which seemed to characterize the common opinion was as follows:

> The objectives of education should be to:
> a) teach the student how to teach himself.
> b) teach the student how to adapt to our rapidly changing world.
> c) teach communications - how to relate to each other and the rest of the world.
> d) teach the student self-discipline through responsibility.
> e) teach students to work to the best of their ability and to produce a standard of workmanship in which they can have pride.
> f) teach respect for all types of work.
> g) teach respect for all our fellowmen.
> h) teach all these things and still preserve individuality as an end result.

And a second submission which also attempted a summary:

> The primary objective of education should be to develop the student to the maximum of his or her potential:
> - by providing him with the skills necessary to express himself in written and oral form.
> - by creating in him a sense of individual responsibility.
> - by encouraging an inquiring mind and the capacity for critical thinking.
> - by enabling him to continue his education beyond the elementary and secondary level.
> - by preparing him as well as possible for the kind of employment he is likely to find.
> - by introducing him to the kind of cultural and athletic activities which will make his leisure time more fulfilling and rewarding.

ALTERNATIVES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

For the majority of parents and students, there would be satisfaction if the schools simply did well what they are presently doing.

But to satisfy a significant minority, without catering to extreme positions, certain alternatives should be available. It was felt

that choice benefits and frees everybody. One mother said:

> I realize that many people may not agree with my ideas concerning the objectives of schooling. For this reason I strongly plead for the establishment of alternatives within the public school system. Parents and children should be given a choice of schools and of teachers with different approaches to teaching, anywhere in the city. This would greatly increase the teachers' freedom too, as they could develop their own teaching styles with the full support and co-operation of their principal and the parents who elected to send their children to them.

It was suggested as a principle that the school should be fitted to the child and not vice-versa. Some parents felt that emphasis on standardization might "easily degenerate into a rigid refusal to acknowledge that children's capacities differ." It was further felt that the obvious solution to unequal aptitudes "is to allow students to proceed at more or less individual rates."

What kind of alternatives are being sought? This report will make suggestions for alternatives in such areas as discipline, teaching methods, curriculum, school attendance, evaluation methods, open boundaries, education facilities, differentiated staffing.

How can these alternatives be handled practically by those who have responsibility? Suggested means included:

(a) Develop schools with distinct profiles, made available through a liberal open boundaries policy. A submission from a family spoke in this vein, expressing their thoughts as follows:

> Finally, some of these objectives might be attainable for those parents and students who want them if the school boundaries were erased and the consumers of education were allowed to select the school with the approach they desired. If this were done, school staffs should be encouraged to develop distinct approaches to the educational process. Some of these suggestions would also involve increased personnel; it is encouraging to see schools attempting to involve parents in both the decisions as to what schools should be achieving and in volunteer work to help attain these objectives. Such efforts at parental involvement should be encouraged.

This principle of being able to select alternative schools within the system received considerable support. One home and school expressed it simply: "If a child is not receiving the kind of education he considers desirable in the school nearest him he should be allowed to attend any other school in the system." This same association suggested that schools develop specialized programs so that they are known for their differences rather than their similarities.

One particular suggestion for a special school was expressed in this way:

> I would like to see one of the high schools being run on an experimental basis in a way rather different from the other schools. One of the small collegiates could be used for this purpose, and students would have the option of attending this school or one of the conventional ones. In such a school, the students and teachers would have certain freedoms which do not exist in most schools today. The school would be set up simply as a centre to facilitate learning. Teachers would function as resource people. There would be sufficient flexibility in programmes to permit each student to pursue things which interest him. There would be some freedom to attend class or not, and to plan - with guidance - how one schedules one's time. There would obviously be rules of conduct, as are necessary whenever large groups of people come together, but such rules would exist for a valid reason and would not be arbitrarily imposed by the administration. A willingness to adhere to such necessary rules and to be prepared to handle a gradually increasingly large part of the responsibility for one's own learning would be expected of all the students. I am prepared to bet that there are in Saskatoon enough kids to populate a small high school who would be prepared to learn this kind of responsibility and who would be far happier than they are in our present schools. Saskatoon has in the past had a reputation for doing creative things to help meet the educational needs of its children, and this sort of step would seem to be what the situation which confronts us calls for.

A separate submission suggested that as part of an experimental high school, students might well profit from modified correspondence courses which could serve "to increase the independence of the pupils in the direction and conduct of their own learning."

It was suggested that in the high school systems, it is feasible for students to register for courses in more than one school, so that their personal program requirements may be met.

(b) Develop special rooms in the present school systems, particularly in the elementary areas, where interested parents can share in the education of their children by greater participation. Considerable interest was shown in a local Open school, and its method of operation. It seemed to be based upon "a much stronger relationship between the family and the school", and on an "active partnership approach." This was seen as an approach having possibilities within the existing school systems.

(c) Develop a more refined system of "contract" teaching in regular high schools. The contracts should be entered into freely and carried out responsibly; in such a program, credit is based on progress rather than attendance.

(d) Experiment to obtain greater flexibility in time scheduling. Public opinion ran very much in favor of the semester system. Some parents questioned the rationale behind a necessary attendance of 200 days. Some asked why the school year is determined on a September to June basis. An opinion was expressed that schooling be on a year round basis. Others asked why the daily time schedule is fixed at 8:30 to 3:30. They seemed to be willing to examine alternatives. Most, however, would leave the school year as it is with the holidays retained in the summer period.

The rigidity of the present system was expressed by one student who said:

> When the bell rings - even if a crucial set of measurements in assigned experiments is in process - the students, conditioned as well as Pavlov's dogs, pack up their books and shift both mentally and physically to a new class.

Another student asked that students be allowed to work independently with an overseeing teacher. She too saw this as permitting longer experiments

in science and a possible enabling of immersion in language.

VIEWING THE SYSTEM

While most contributors to the inquiry pointed out particular aspects of the educational system which they wished to praise or blame, a few attempted to give over-all impressions. On the whole, generalizations regarding elementary schools were complimentary.

Those groups who took surveys of their memberships came up with praise. They found clear majorities who were happy with the present general state of things.

Some who made personal assessments were less favourable to the system. Some stated there was little room for self-discipline and self-exploration; one remarked that creativity and spontaneity were "steam-rolled" out of the child. They corporately identified a problem in the emphasis on competition and on passing and failing. One group said, "Finding winners is not what our schools should be all about. We have a right to expect them to develop healthy human personalities." Another individual commented that students experience fear: "the fear of being wrong, stupid, fear of expressing one's own ideas and feelings."

There were a small number of respondents who blamed the schools for failing to teach the children moral values, and laid responsibility for the present state of the world at the feet of those accountable for our schools.

RESULTS FROM THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY - ENDS AND MEANS

"In school the emphasis must be in teaching students how to learn."

90% agree

"You get the same standard of education no matter what school you go to."

36% agree

"I'd keep the schools running just as they are if I had my way."

39% agree

"Parents should be able to send children to any school they want."

72% agree

"I would like (my child) to go to a school set up to experiment with new teaching methods."

73% agree

"There's no reason why the schools should close for the summer."

38% agree

"Students need the summer for a rest from school."

83% agree

"The schools are preparing the students well for life after they leave school."

52% agree

"The school system is better than it was twenty-five years ago."

91% agree

"Saskatoon has a very good school system."

81% agree

SUMMARY - ENDS AND MEANS

1. In Saskatoon there is a consensus on the general objectives of education. Citizens believe that the school program should have as its aim and objective the development of the individual student to the maximum of his or her potential. This will be achieved through the development of:

(a) communicative skills - oral and written communicative skills, and mathematical concepts and practices;

(b) a wide range of interests and abilities - to suit the student in order to cope with the changing society. The education of the "whole" child.

(c) a motivation to learn;

(d) an ability to learn for himself, and to think critically and creatively;

(e) moral and/or social values in support of the values taught in the home and in society.

2. Every student should have equal educational opportunities regardless of his residence, race or religion and without restriction on the basis of any physical handicap or emotional or learning disability.

3. There is general satisfaction with the elementary school system; satisfaction with secondary schools is less general.

4. A significant minority are seeking alternatives within the school system. Many of these alternatives become possible only with the removal of school boundaries.

5. There is a strong feeling in favour of school vacation periods during the summer.

B. PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

B. PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

Judging from the contributions made to the Citizens' School Inquiry, it seems that most Saskatoon citizens accept the traditional division of curriculum into subject areas. However they would make some changes in subject offerings, mainly as follows:

(1) the strengthening of some courses and programs now offered (such as Language Arts, Mathematics, French, Fine Arts, Physical Education),

(2) the availability for all of adequate Family Life Education, Canadian Studies, Education for Leisure,

(3) the addition of more full-credit and mini-length optional courses at the secondary level (such as world religions, psychology, sociology, ecology, anthropology, philosophy, economics, political science, industrual arts and crafts),

(4) the removal of a seven-subject minimum requirement in high school.

No one change, of course, would be agreeable to all.

Not surprising in an increasingly mobile society, a strong call was heard for the standardization of curricula from coast-to-coast in Canada. This need was felt especially in Mathematics, English Grammar, and the compulsory subjects. Some felt that such standardization was lacking even within Saskatchewan, and one person complained that in Saskatoon, rooms of the same grade in the same school seemed to have different programs and schedules.

A far larger number of contributors, however, opposed standardization and called specifically for greater individualization of program and rate of progress to accommodate individual differences in students.

They would tailor the program to fit the student, rather than require the student to adjust to a rigid school program.

BASIC SKILLS (3R's)

The largest number of submissions on any topic whatever were those concerning the importance of the basic skills of language arts (reading, writing and speaking English) and mathematics. These briefs, which included a number from home and school associations, recommended that highest priority be attached to these areas, particularly at the elementary level.

Many people noted that high school graduates are frequently deficient in spoken and written English and in basic mathematical skills. A professor who called for more school time spent on basic skills said this of his students at the university: "Rather severe difficulty in reading, spelling and composition is so common as to be normal." One community group, concerned about the inability of many high school graduates to "write a simple sentence . . . (and) carry out basic arithmetical computations", blamed an overloaded school curriculum for the problem:

> Because it has tended to take on more and more of the responsibilities of the home, the church, and the community, the school is probably not doing as good a job as it should in those areas for which it was created--namely to provide instruction in the three R's. . . . Without these basic tools, students are at a definite disadvantage, no matter what they may be doing after graduation.

One parent suggested that a major cause of deficiencies of graduates in spoken and written English may be because English "is taught in isolation", instead of being taught as an "inter-disciplinary skill", emphasized by the science teacher, the physical education teacher, the mathematics teacher, the social studies teacher, as well as the language arts teacher. Another suggestion was that English or language arts teachers need more time: time "to drill the rules of grammar, . . . to mark the exercises these drills require, and . . . to dwell on creativity". Paid teacher assistants

or parents with undergraduate degrees in English or speech would be of great help in lightening the load of high school English teachers, said one citizen. Several other contributors called for more remedial reading teachers and speech therapists.

A few parents expressed "doubts" about the teaching and value of "new math". Complaints were that compared with "old math", new math is more "difficult and confusing for students to learn, for teachers to teach and for parents to understand."

Only one contributor stated that there was too much emphasis on books and reading in our schools, and that such emphasis induces anxiety in poor readers. He recommended that "learning experiences in the schools should be based on as wide an input of sensory experience as possible and the output measured by as many methods as possible, rather than relying entirely on writing and reading."

FINE ARTS

While a number of contributors believe that basic skills should get more attention, even if it means giving less attention to fine arts, physical education, sciences or counselling, others believe that schools should not be "narrowly academic", but should provide for "a wide range of cultural and social interests." There was considerable interest shown by individuals, home and school groups, and art and music teachers in an expansion of fine arts offerings in schools. A professor of music put the case for fine arts this way:

> Any respectable view of man must recognize his physical, intellectual, and spiritual nature and the school curriculum must reflect this. Ample exposure to physical culture, to intellectual discipline, and to the spiritual/esthetic values of art, music and drama should be provided for each student in every grade . . .
>
> The absence [in Saskatoon] of theatres and specially designed and equipped art and music rooms suggests that we do not yet understand the importance of these kinds of experiences . . . .

Several students noted a lack of fine arts facilities and teachers. "Public school students are very seldom lucky enough to have a qualified art teacher", observed one, "but a solid background in art is a basic requirement for many professions such as interior decorating, architecture, and fashion designing." Other students claimed that art and music "are practically ignored" and "classes in drama and music are especially lacking."

One brief included suggestions for improving and expanding the elementary and secondary school art programs. "Each elementary school should have a qualified art teacher halftime . . . and a room set aside specifically for art," it stated. And at the secondary level, consideration should be given to "centralizing all art education in one or two centres which are easily accessible by bus." Such an arrangement, it is claimed, would mean that "equipment could be used by more people and teachers could specialize to some degree."

An art teachers' organization recommended that every child should take art for the first eight years of school, and called for qualified art teachers in each school, special art rooms, increased instruction time, and resident artists in association with the school system.

A brief from school music teachers pointed out that "there are no rooms in the entire school system which have been designed for the purpose of music instruction", and "forty-four percent of the elementary schools do not have instrumental music programs." They recommended "more qualified personnel" in both the elementary schools and collegiates, "more equipment", and "better facilities". A spokesman for the group stated that ""music should be compulsory in the elementary school . . . up to some place in the division three level." Several individuals at public meetings agreed that music should be offered as part of the regular curriculum.

FRENCH INSTRUCTION

We received a significant number of submissions supporting French instruction. We were told that in 1967 the Department of Education introduced a six-year French program to begin in Division III (year seven) and that the "Saskatoon public school system is the only major school system in Saskatchewan which has not fully implemented the Division III French program." At present, they said, "seventy-five percent of the grade seven and eight students in Saskatoon's public schools" do not get French instruction at school. However, it is noted that the Saskatoon separate school board introduced French in all grade four classrooms in 1964, and in 1967 they implemented the Department of Education Division III French program.

The French Teachers' Association recommended the following to the public school system: that the Department of Education French program be implemented beginning in grade seven in all elementary schools; that a full-time co-ordinator of French for Divisions III and IV be employed; that daily twenty-five to thirty minute periods be allocated to the study of French in grades seven and eight; that class size be limited to twenty students; that teachers hired to teach French be qualified to teach French. The latter three recommendations were also directed to the separate school system. Several groups, including home and school associations, supported the brief of the French teachers, and urged that French be taught to students at as early an age as possible.

One brief recommended that "instruction of Ukrainian during school hours, and beginning no later than Year IV". be introduced immediately in those "various school districts or areas" where the demand arises.

CANADIAN STUDIES

Some contributors recommended that Canadian studies be emphasized much more. One parent asked that Canadian studies be "given priority on curricula throughout all 12 grades". She explained:

> The older children [her own] are hazy about their country's history, geography, legal system, and structures of government. It is small wonder that few local residents attend board and aldermanic meetings, vote in local elections, or attempt to manipulate government or press for change; they probably don't know how to go about it.

Several groups recommended class trips to historical sites, comparative studies on political parties, studies of basic laws and legal rights of the individual in our society, and compulsory classes in Canadian social studies, with instruction by Canadians from books written by Canadians.

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION, HOME LIVING AND HEALTH EDUCATION

About a dozen briefs, including some from groups, stated the need for family life education, to be taught in both elementary and secondary schools. Child care should be an integral part of this education, according to a brief from a women's association. One brief, supported by others, claimed that in the years before grade eight there should be "complete coverage of fundamental sex education, including sexual anatomy and physiology, contraception, venereal disease and feelings towards members of the opposite sex." Others recommended that at some stage in basic education, both boys and girls should have instruction in such things as household budgeting, home management, maintenance and repair, consumer buying and credit, car-care, elementary first aid and lifesaving.

Several people at public meetings stated that there is not enough emphasis placed on health education in our schools, on knowledge about the human body and how to care for it. Education beginning in early grades, about proper nutrition and exercise, and about drug abuse were seen as important.

EDUCATION FOR LEISURE

Several contributors suggested that in the future, education must be geared more toward preparation for leisure and less toward preparation for jobs, since with a shorter work week and early retirement there will be more spare time.

A couple of home and school groups suggested that students from the elementary years up need to be prepared for future leisure by learning hobbies and crafts, engaging in nature study and camping outdoors, and learning individual sports such as golf, tennis, swimming and bowling that can be enjoyed throughout life. Another brief suggested guidelines for leisure education. In future, they maintained, "the school will have to drop its traditional policy of isolating leisure education on the island of extracurricular activities and bring it into the mainland of the school curriculum itself." And further, "education for leisure cannot be the exclusive domain of any one segment or level of education." Important skills for leisure, they suggested, should do the following:

- Aid body development, movement, and motor co-ordination, usually expressed in physical activities such as games, dance, and sports.
- Contribute to safety and survival, such as swimming and driving a vehicle efficiently and carefully.
- Bring good literature into our lives . . .
- Make use of creative hands in shaping materials, such as painting, sculpturing, tying flies . . .
- Bring appreciation and enjoyment of the outdoors . . .
- Make it possible to create vocal and instrumental music, or at least enjoy listening to them.
- Allow us to express ourselves through drama.
- Enable us to learn the joy of being of service to others.

A few contributors were opposed to giving more school time to leisure education. One parent suggested that training for the use of leisure time should be "the job of Parks and Recreation, the Y", but not of the schools: that the curriculum becomes overloaded when the school assumes responsibility for every sort of child care and educational experience.

OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

About a dozen briefs, including a number from students, suggested that more options should be offered at the high school level. Courses recommended were psychology, sociology, ecology, anthropology, philosophy, comparative studies on world religions, economics, political science. It was argued that university is too late to begin these subjects, since those students not going beyond grade twelve should have at least the opportunity of an introduction to them. One youth group asked that more students from the regular high schools be able to take the specialized shop programs, such as metal work, automotives and electronics, which are offered at the comprehensive collegiates.

Several briefs discussed the vocational and industrial arts programs. It was claimed that high school should provide a broad general education, including offerings in industrial arts as well as in academic subjects, but that it should not provide specific vocational preparation. Functions of industrial arts courses in high schools were outlined as follows:

(1) to familiarize students with vocational opportunities, problems and practices;

(2) to give those students intending to pursue a high level technical course at a post-secondary institute an adequate grounding in math and science;

(3) to provide preparation for a hobby for leisure time.

A teacher of industrial arts recommended that there be established a central core of subject matter for industrial arts and that teachers be required to follow the established curriculum.

There was considerable opposition to the reduction by the Provincial Department of Education on minimum requirements in Division

Four from eight to seven subjects. One High School Staff expressed the opinion that "reduction in . . . credit requirements . . . has encouraged student indifference toward wider and in-depth exploration of available courses." Another group of teachers suggested that "the Department [has] put some financial pressure on Boards to reduce the number of courses each student can take."

Reflecting the theme that since we usually have only one chance at formal education, it should be the fullest education possible, a high school home and school association put its argument this way:

> Since subjects are only a means of gaining [educational] objectives . . . , let any number be taught that helps reach these goals. However, in our present educational structure, the majority of [our] parents felt a minimum of seven subjects was unrealistic, and that there should be no maximum number set.

DRIVER EDUCATION

We did not receive a large number of submissions about driver education, but most of those who did comment spoke favourably. One youth wrote, "We heartily approve the Driver Education Program as a meaningful part of education in our modern world and we hope that nothing will be done to cut back or remove this program." A father, three of whose children had taken the program, wrote this:

> I am happy with the attitude that my children have taken toward the responsibilities associated with driving a car and would hope that . . . this good program be . . . continued and strengthened in our High Schools.

A brief from the Driver Education Staff of the Public Board of Education recommended changes in the Driver Education program: that it be made a credit course in the regular school curriculum instead of being extracurricular; that it be conducted during school hours; that the classroom theory be extended to 30 hours from 24; that there be no fee; and

that it be part of a kindergarten-to-Grade-12 safety program, made possible by the Department of Education on a province-wide basis.

A couple of briefs questioned whether Driver Education should be a school responsibility, since it is expensive and perhaps prevents the offering of courses "more meaningful to general education."

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

A lot of interest was shown by many contributors about physical education and sports. There was a variety of opinion, but most of these briefs called for an expanded physical education program in elementary and secondary schools, with less emphasis on competition and inter-school team sports and more emphasis on general participation and individual "carry-over" sports (such as curling, badminton, tennis, swimming, golf, bowling, skiing). A few contributors stated that there is already too much emphasis on sports, at the expense of either basic subjects or of music and art.

It was felt that the physical education program at the elementary level is not well developed and lacks qualified staff. Referring to the elementary system, a teacher at a public meeting stated this:

> I think we have a very poor physical education set-up in the elementary schools. And we have very few people who are qualified to teach physical education in the elementary schools. And certainly this is one of the places it must start.

One elementary home and school brief recommended that a good physical education program be available in all Saskatoon schools, with instruction by qualified physical education teachers, and that this program encourage all children, girls as much as boys, to develop their physical skills, but "without the pressure of competition always present" as it is in the presently organized team sports. Another home and school recommended "daily Physical Education activity for all students."

At the high school level it was felt that competitive inter-school team sports for the talented few received too much time and attention and that instead money should be spent primarily on programs that benefit all students. A student at a public meeting earned a round of applause when he stated that he would rather participate in sport "for the enjoyment of it, rather than the competitive spirit of it." Another student commented this way:

> The athletic program is now focused on the superstar who plays on teams, instead of emphasizing participation for all for fun and fitness . . . A well-run intramural program which caters to the person of average physical ability is extremely important.

One brief, however, noted this problem:

> There is evidence of declining interest in the traditional program of interhouse competition . . . The privilege to leave school early in the day seems to be a factor undermining the participation in intramural activities.

Several briefs suggested dissolution of inter-collegiate team sports. A group of educators queried:

> Is the cost of and the effort required by some major inter-collegiate sports a necessary part of the public school system? (The Schools have quietly given up hockey--what of organizing football outside of the school system?)

A parent suggested that "football and heavy concentration on inter-school contests . . . encourages a whole generation of spectators." A medical doctor, and parent of elementary school children, wrote "The physical education programme is completely ineffectual as a means of promoting improved student physique but it is very expensive in capital and operating costs."

EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

a) The Academically Talented or Gifted

Many citizens addressed themselves to the topic of the academically talented; most were in favor of the special classes now offered for gifted children and would like to see an expansion of the program in availability and content. Several students who had been part of this program said it was "challenging", "interesting" and "enjoyable" and should be extended into the high schools. One parent who supported these special classes remarked as follows about gifted students:

> These are the neglected children in regular classrooms if there are too many students for one teacher. The gifted easily become bored, lazy, underachieving. In special classes, far from becoming 'intellectual snobs', they become quite humble kids because for once they're being pitted against their peers or better.

A brief from an organization of social workers, who recommended the program, suggested that there be financial help (mainly busfare) for families that cannot afford to send their academically-talented children to the school providing this program. They also suggested that volunteers be used to help with the program in order to minimize costs.

A community group critical of the program argued this:

> [T]he segregation of any group of students is antithetical to the prevailing educational philosophy that exceptional children have more in common with other students than they have differences and therefore they should be kept with other children rather than being set apart.

b) The Handicapped (Emotionally, Socially, Mentally)

Many more citizens addressed themselves to the needs of the child with emotional and learning disabilities than to the gifted, suggesting that more attention must be given to helping the handicapped fulfill their potential and to function as responsible, independent members of society. It was brought to our attention that the "incidence

of children whose needs are different enough in one or more areas of exceptionality as to need special educational services is estimated at between eight percent and sixteen percent of the school population."

Several briefs endorsed the adoption of the principle of integrating exceptional children into the regular school classes and programs to the extent possible. One means to facilitate this integration, they suggested, would be for every teacher to have at least introductory courses in the education of exceptional children. Further, "personnel with specific higher-level skills in corrective and remedial work are required" to provide assistance to regular class teachers and to students needing special help. A lower pupil/teacher ratio was also seen as important. Another suggestion was that the Department of Special Education in the school system "use the full-time assistance of child psychiatrists and clinical psychologists."

It was claimed that at present the services for children with a "marked degree of emotional disturbance", who require special classes, is nowhere near adequate. Several noted, too, that the classes for the mentally handicapped need more trained personnel, such as speech therapists. One parent wrote that teachers in the classes for the "educable mentally handicapped" lack "knowledge, training and time to sufficiently deal with all the class members and all their problems."

Several briefs pointed out a great need for provision of services for early identification, before age six, of emotional and behavioral problems and learning disabilities. Early identification and adequate follow-up services can be a preventive measure "which could lead to reduction in expenditure on special classes, remedial assistance, counselling and eventually social welfare payments", one group stated. It was recommended that priority be given to children with special learning needs in establishment of pre-school programs.

Referring to the secondary level, one brief stated that it is "virtually impossible" to provide the "necessary diversity within the context of the traditional framework of secondary school" to meet the needs of exceptional adolescents, and that therefore, special arrangements need to be made. For one thing, "use of tutorial and guided study programmes for meeting extraordinary needs" should be explored. Secondly, closer co-operation and communication between the schools and community agencies providing social work is recommended.

Several contributors commended the Radius Tutoring Project as an alternative to the regular high school program for those who drop out or are unable to cope with mainstream education. This program of studies, financed by the Department of Welfare, operates during the regular school year in private dwellings in Saskatoon. The students, ranging in age from pre-teen to middle age, take courses by correspondence, guided by teachers and tutors trained in "Reality Therapy". The project uses reality therapy to effect behavioral changes; focus of attention is "consistently placed upon the present and the immediate future, for to look back means, in most cases, only to recall failure." The long-term goal is return to the regular school system.

Several contributors pointed out a need for more pre-employment work-study programmes in the school, linked with local industries. One collegiate staff also recommended that there be "more training programs available that do not require grade 11 or 12 for admission." Another group of high school teachers proposed the establishment of an "Employment Council" (to include representatives from industry, the professions, civic government, labour unions, teachers, students and parents), whose main role would be to provide opportunities for "education outside the

formal school system", in the form of "education on the job", for those students (beyond grade 10) who are unmotivated at school or are "incapable of learning beyond a specific level." It was suggested that local and provincial tax money that is now being used to keep these young people in school should be directed to helping them learn outside school.

RESULTS FROM THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY - PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

"The elementary (Grades 1 to 8) school curriculum has not kept up with the times."

43% agree

"There's not enough emphasis placed on teaching the three R's in elementary school" (Grades 1 to 8)

52% agree

"There should be more emphasis on Canadian things and people in history, literature, etc."

85% agree

"High school students should be able to study subjects they're interested in, even though these subjects are not in the curriculum."

80% agree

"Religion should be part of the school curriculum."

38% agree

"There's little point in learning French in Saskatoon schools."

33% agree

"There's not enough attention paid to sports."

38% agree

"Students who don't make the team in sports are made to feel failures."

37% agree

"It would be better if a high school student learning a trade were out working as an apprentice at least part of the school year."

80% agree

"Instead of teaching trades in the classroom there should be an apprentice system."

59% agree

"Students not in the academic stream are looked upon as inferior."

61% agree

"The school system is not geared to cope with the slow learner."

65% agree

"The gifted child gets a raw deal."

37% agree

SUMMARY - PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

1. Saskatonians expect elementary and secondary schools to do a competent job of teaching the basic skills of spoken and written English and mathematics. There is evidence that graduates are deficient in these skills.

2. Many citizens consider good Fine Arts education, especially art and music education, as important at both elementary and secondary levels. A sizeable number, however, would put Fine Arts secondary to thorough education in basic skills.

3. Most citizens consider French instruction important and would like to see it available to all students, beginning at least by year seven.

4. Most citizens consider increased emphasis on Canadian content and studies important at both elementary and secondary levels.

5. Most citizens consider physical education important. However, many would like the emphasis put on more general participation in team sports, on fitness and on individual "carry-over" sports, rather than on competitive inter-collegiate team sports.

6. A seven-subject minimum requirement in high schools is considered inadequate.

7. Special education: Many believe that more attention must be paid to those students requiring special educational services, both the handicapped and the gifted. The handicapped are considered to be especially in need of early diagnosis and services. As well, more professional assistance in the handling of emotional and learning problems within the school is seen as necessary.

C. THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL

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TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE

Saskatoon citizens regard teachers as the key to quality education. They expect them to perform with competence. The public appear to conclude that the best assurance of the presence of competence on the part of the individual will be through a combination of two factors: firstly, academic training, preferably to the degree level; secondly, an ability to relate well to the students as individuals.

As to the matter of academic training the following comments were heard:

> We believe that the school systems should strive towards a policy of having all degree-holding teachers in the system.

A Home and School Association, following a questionnaire to its membership, said:

> Throughout all the comments, changes and complaints listed on the questionnaire, the desire for high academic and teaching standards was evident.

Coupled with the call for academic attainment was the suggestion that highly qualified teachers should be sought for the early grades. There seemed to be a feeling on the part of some that existing policy pointed in the opposite direction. In this regard these comments were heard:

> Greater priority should be given to the lower grades of school, since these are the years when the most crucial learning takes place. This priority should be reflected in such factors as the academic qualifications of teachers . . .

> This question of competency should be faced in the present situation of education. Too often, inexperienced or less competent teachers are placed in charge of primary grades, mainly because they are inexperienced or less competent. The rationale is that 'it really doesn't matter', because they are dealing with the youngest children in the school. The first three years of primary school, to

> my mind, are the most important of all school years. Here, the child develops work habits and is trained in the most basic skills. Here, the relationships between teacher and pupil are established for a lifetime. However, the concept of school prevalent in our society, as a baby-sitting service denies the importance of such factors.

Referring to the call for a warm and communicative relationship between the teacher and the individual student, citizens made the following comments:

> Youngsters should like to go to school, and should be able to look forward with some pleasurable anticipation to each day. This can best be accomplished by being sure that youngsters go into classrooms staffed by teachers who are mature, sincerely interested in young people, and willing to let them be individuals in a group situation. Dollar inputs of teaching materials, audio-visual aids, resource materials, etc., may give a sense of luxury to the school situation, but may or may not contribute to the quality of the educational experience. Hence, meeting demands for these things should come after the human element has been provided in the form of understanding teachers who are readily accessible.
>
> I would much sooner have my youngsters taught by someone who likes them and shows it; who can let them be individuals, and still get along with them, than by a teacher who had lots of academic training but no real desire, or ability, to get close to them.

> Teachers ought to <u>like</u> children. They should be able to relate well to children and understand their emotional needs and behavioral problems. Of course, teachers should have a reasonable degree of knowledge and intelligence. They must be able to adapt to change and have an enthusiastic outlook toward learning.

The feeling is present that while academic achievement is attainable by those endowed with the requisite amount of brain power, that alone should not entitle an applicant to enrolment in the College of Education. Ability to attain academic degrees is separate from suitability to teach. This feeling has led to considerable comment directed to us on the question of screening applicants for enrolment in the College of Education for personal suitability to teaching.

Representative of a number of briefs was the Home and School Association which expressed the point as follows:

> We feel that education is . . . charged with the guidance of the people of the future. More critical screening of those who would enter the teaching profession is needed. Academic standards alone should not be the basis of admission.

Further, some comment was made about the inadequacy of the academic preparation of teachers. The length and the content of the course were questioned. The opinion was expressed that a two year course was too short and that not enough time was spent in studying the subject matter to be taught. It was suggested that some of the courses offered in teaching training lacked intellectual depth and challenge.

Again, some contributors recommended that teachers be encouraged to take in-service training to ensure that they keep up to date in new methods and course content. By way of example, one brief recommended classes to help teachers handle individualized instruction methods.

TENURE

The present tenure laws were brought into question by a significant number of contributors. The spectrum of solutions ranged from minor variations to outright abolition. The most frequently stated position seemed to be that the principle of tenure should be preserved but that it be modified as to both its initial attainment and its retention. The following are some proposals that have been put to us in this regard:

1. From a teaching parent:

> The Teacher Tenure Act is in need of revision or if possible abandoned completely. A teacher can work hard, teach well, impress the superintendent for two years and then 'rest on his laurels' for the rest of his teaching life, knowing that he cannot be released from his position even if a better teacher could be found.

2. From a community Association:

> In view of the fact that it is often difficult in two

> years to assess the long term competency of most teachers, tenure should be acquired after five years, and there should be a periodic review of the teacher's performance after tenure has been acquired.
>
> 3. From an individual:
>
> It is considered that tenure should only be granted after five years of teaching, and that it be for a five year term after which the teacher's performance would be reviewed before granting tenure for another five year term.
>
> 4. From a parent:
>
> It should be possible for school boards to dismiss incompetent and unsatisfactory teachers without outside interference. Poor performance is not tolerated in most other areas of employment, and definitely should not be tolerated in teachers dealing with our children and young people in their formative years.

MERIT PAY

By comparison to those who expressed themselves on tenure, fewer citizens spoke out on the matter of merit pay. Some suggestions were received, however, calling for implementation of payment on the basis of merit. Individual submissions stated:

> Teachers should be rewarded on their ability to teach, their understanding of children and desire to impart their knowledge - not on the number of degrees they've attained.

> A good teacher, teaching each day to the fullest and best of his ability is worthy of a good salary. But the good teachers who are working hard are paid the same salary as weak teachers who put in a very minimum effort. I feel that a teacher's salary should not be measured by degrees but by performance in the classroom. This performance can be assessed by the principal, particularly if he did the hiring, by examinations written by students but set by an outside source--doing away with accreditation, and by simply asking students to rate their teachers--students in High School are not fooled by teachers who are incompetent in their particular field.

The individual whose best contribution is obviously classroom teaching must not feel compelled for economic reasons to attempt a move into administration and accordingly, a recognition of his position is warranted and perhaps that will come through a merit system. One contributor expressed it in the following words:

> Adequate recognition must be given to such teachers, other than removing them from the classroom and placing them in areas of administration.

PRINCIPALS

The role of the principal was recognized as one of key importance. It was felt that the utmost care and attention must be taken in the matter of selection of principals. One citizen expressed the importance of the school principalship in the following terms:

> The principal holds a key position from which he/she exerts much influence. For example, the acceptance and introduction of (or thwarting of) new ideas, curricula, teaching methods, teaching aids, resource personnel and improved facilities are dependent, in large measure, upon the principal. An individual who is not well-placed in an administrative position can become an obstacle to the implementation and development of the professionally researched, innovative, progressive programs and policies of the School Board and central office. To ensure that our students receive the kind of education which our very able senior administrative staff publicly recommend and support, it is necessary that our local school administrator be held accountable for the learning environment of 'his school'.

In this latter area some felt the principal should have a greater say in the selection of teachers for his school. One parent expressed the point as follows:

> Principals are in a better position to choose their own staff than are School Board officials. At present, principals are stuck with a staff which was hired by someone else. Why not put the principal in charge of his school and then at least the tax-payer will know whom to point the finger at if the teachers do not perform according to expectations. Under the present heirarchy, no one person seems to be in any position of authority.

Elementary principals commented on their role in the educational process as follows:

> In an institution that must increasingly become more sensitive and more capable of adjusting to change the principal cannot afford to be a 'functionary' who is busy with clerical and minor administrative routine. His new role must become one of being truly the educational leader in the school which requires establishing with the staff and community educational goals for that school.

The authors of the same brief later quoted from the book, Frontiers in School Leadership edited by Louis J. Rubin, to summarize their views:

> Change will not eliminate the principal; it may well liberate him. For change, if it is to come at all, will come largely through his efforts, and unless he can be freed from the bondage of many of his present management tasks, he will not have the necessary energy to exercise his leadership.

From the foregoing it can be seen that selecting proper personnel to fill the position of principal is crucial.

There must be a recognition that the outstanding classroom teacher will not necessarily be able to perform well in an administrative position. If a classroom teacher does make a move into a principalship or other administrative position without commendable results, it is suggested a mechanism must be present for his further move, presumably back into the classroom atmosphere. This latter point of view has been expressed to us in the following manner:

> The problem is a difficult one to settle to everyone's satisfaction but it may be necessary for the school board to have the right to re-assign principals to lesser positions for which they are qualified, and from which they will better serve our students. Perhaps the real problem to be faced is to maintain security of position and tenure, while insisting that the position of principal be filled by competent administrators.

LIASON BETWEEN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

A strong need for closer communications between teachers in the elementary and senior schools was indicated by several writers. One student commented

> The high school teachers seldom know what you were taught in grades one to seven, and I know from personal experience that grade eight courses are often repeated in grade nine (especially composition, algebra and french) This shows very poor organization of the educational system.

A group of educators admitted that presently, elementary-secondary school co-ordination was less than perfect saying "there is a failure to articulate, practice and program as well as it could be done."

One group asked for justification of the present organization of our schools:

> The Division System in Saskatchewan is based on a 6-3-3 pattern, while the public schools in Saskatoon have a 8-4 pattern and the separate school a 7-5 arrangement. Since curriculum design is based on the provincial division system, a school district whose organization of schools does not approximate the division system has greater difficulty providing the programs which the system recommends.

TEACHING METHODS

Teaching methods employed in the classroom have come in for considerable attention in our study. Of those who communicated with us, parents with children in school have had the most to say to us in this regard. In no sense have parents spoken to us with a unanimous voice. We have heard sufficient, however, to appreciate that some changes adopted over recent years have not been totally understood or accepted, perhaps because the reasons for their introduction have not been made clear to the public.

It may be that this is what has prompted one parent to ask:

> Could it be that teaching methods are wrong? A major obsession in all levels of education is that 'new' necessarily means 'better'. We are obsessed by the necessity to change, apparently as often as possible, regardless of whether change is for the better or not. New ideas should be encouraged but should not be introduced until they are shown to be demonstrably better than the old ones. The only justification for introducing a new technique should be that it helps educate a person more effectively and/or to a higher degree.

Typical criticism of the teaching methods of some teachers has been expressed in the following quotes by two separate citizens, the first a student and the second a parent:

> Everyone is aware of problem students and what can be done about them but not much mention is made of 'problem teachers' such as teachers who can stand in front of a class for sixty minutes every day of the year without any discussion by the students. As a result of this conditioning, classes that should or do encourage discussion, suffer. Students soon become apathetic to everything that takes place in the class. . . . Some teachers tend to look down on students and put little value on their opinions. In some classes where on occasion the student is given the chance to express opinions they are cut down by the teachers. This too stifles involvement.

> Perhaps what worries me most is the teaching of language and social studies by requiring children to fill in words in blank spaces, day after day, after day. My own Grade II son is now in book II of his language work book series on page 139. His learning has taken through each page in turn. Not once to my knowledge has there been a digression. Has the perfect book been discovered? . . .
>
> I am not suggesting that work books have no place; they have, but only as an aid to learning. All children should be encouraged to write creatively the moment they are capable of putting two words together. I would like to see more enterprise and originality in schools. A quiet classroom is not always a good classroom.

To turn to specifics we were addressed a number of times on the question of the "open area" concept. The comment was overwhelmingly in opposition to this method of instruction. In most instances the reasons for the expressed opposition were carefully documented and included such comments as:

- They "are noisy and hard for young children to concentrate in".
- This "is getting further away from individual attention."
- They "are a distraction for students who are 'distraction prone'".
- My son is "upset with the noise . . . has wasted a lot of his time."
- Such "less structured systems are apparently leading to a decrease in accountability of the teaching profession to those whom they serve."
- "I feel they are noisy, distracting and encourage the children to become lazy and daydreamers.'"

The only positive response came from a community association which recommended the open-area system through divisions 1 and 2.

A spokesman at one of our public meetings from a home and school association, in listing reasons against the open-area system prefaced his remarks by saying "we feel that the large open-areas being built into our new schools, don't seem to be producing better quality education for our children."

When discussing teaching methods several contributors suggested that better use could be made of community resources. Opinions in this area indicated that while a few would make the entire community the school, most would accept field trips into the surrounding community as being sufficient. The former opinion would say that school should be held in any place relevant to children, any physical building or location which enables the child to learn and explore for himself.

There was a considerable call for out-of-doors education, expressed in one submission in the following way:

> [There should be] greater orientation towards out-of-doors education, as far as our climatic conditions allow, with emphasis on and implication of man's place in the ecological system.

It was also suggested that students participate in the decision-making of where they want to go on field trips and what they would like to explore.

One student mentioned an interesting course in Canadian law which has been given at his high school by members of the legal society and Judiciary in Saskatoon, pointing it up as having been an outstanding success and an excellent example of the proper use of community resources. Several submissions saw visits to City Council and the Provincial Legislature as being ways of utilizing these resources.

A business group offered the "student dialogue program" as a way by which students are enabled to come in closer contact with the business community.

Comments made on the question of acceleration practices within the schools have, in the main, been of a negative nature. A Professor consultant in the field of child and youth psychiatry has drawn on his experience to say:

> A further matter of concern is the vexed question of acceleration or retardation. There seems to be little to commend either technique since in both instances the children are removed from their friends and from their age peers. Neither really learns to get along with the other and the stage is set for discrimination on an intellectual basis. Many children have been seen who have problems directly related to their failure and subsequent removal to a lower grade. It would seem that the most vulnerable time for this to occur is grade IV and the blow struck is one from which many children never recover. Equally, the question of internal acceleration breeds discontent, anxiety and fear in the transplanted ones who have to try to catch up, not with the academic achievements of the older group, but with their physical and emotional achievements. This is especially hard on young girls moved up into a pubescent group.

Two proposals were received suggesting that an acceptable alternative to acceleration would be an enrichment program for the child. These contributors said:

> 1. A common practice in the schools is acceleration. Depriving children of time in school to develop and learn is unfair to these exceptional children. Greater emphasis on enrichment, including broader education than the skill subjects, could be of infinite value in

> equipping a child for independent adulthood. The present system merely individualizes to a limited degree the rate of progress in the skill subjects.
>
> 2. Although some members of our family have been accelerated and have encountered no great problems as a result I would much prefer a stepped-up enrichment program for those in need of further challenge. Perhaps a school could suggest some forms of enrichment which could be embarked upon by the parents or by way of a co-operative effort by parents and school, thus not dumping yet another obligation solely on the school system.

Another contribution expressed the view that under a system of "continuous progress" parents are not aware of acceleration taking place. This group then recommends:

> Because of problems which are often created with respect to social maturity and the completion of high school at an early age, we would advocate that overall acceleration of the students' program only take place with the full knowledge of the parents, so that they are completely aware of the implications of such acceleration.

We did receive a large number of submissions dealing with the question of streaming of students into levels or areas where it is considered their talents best fit. One home and school association that spoke out strongly in favour of the academic talented classes at the elementary school level seemed to back away from an outright endorsation of academic streaming at the high school level and suggested individual programming with flexibility of subject choice as an alternative. Another brief, while acknowledging the merits of the streaming process, suggested caution in the following words:

> Although selecting and streaming individuals according to their talents and capabilities seems desirable, a word of caution must be issued. The end result of such streaming must necessarily preserve the dignity of the individual, so that those working in jobs at the low end of the socio-economic scale do not do so in despair of improving their own situation. No violence is greater than psychological violence, whereby a man is made to feel that his position in society exists merely because he has been told repeatedly that he is no good for anything else.

EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Considerable has been addressed to this Committee on the question of student evaluation. There appears to be agreement that evaluation of each students' progress must be made from time to time. There is unanimity on the part of parents in wanting to know the progress their child is making in school. There was no attitude of "it's the school's worry and responsibility--not ours."

It is also fair to say that the majority favour a system of continuous evaluation rather than emphasis only on examinations. On this point:

A parent said:

> Schools should base reports of a child's progress on all of his work, not just on his examinations. All-important examinations encourage rigidity and give very false impressions.

A student said:

> 'Grade' students according to a percentile system based on completion of assignments, originality, attitude, effort put into the class, and less on 'examinations' as such.

A Home and School Association said:

> Continuous evaluation is preferred to a single comprehensive exam at the end of the year's work. This evaluation would be of ability, attitude, performance as well as end result.
>
> However, the parents felt that the students should have the experience of writing a comprehensive exam sometime during the year.

A high school teaching staff commenting on this proposal said:

> We believe continuous-progress evaluation, a technique in which week-by-week student progress forms a basis for promotion rather than only end-of-term examinations, is a strong feature since it is intended to develop greater responsibility and better work habits in students.

The basis for making the evaluation also prompted comment. Some parents want to know where their children stand in comparison to others in

the class. The suggestion from this group seems to be that the basis for the evaluation should be found in drawing such comparisons. One parent described competition in the classroom as "healthy and needed." Another asked "why can't parents know exactly where junior stands scholastically in relation to his classmates?" We believe that the tone of the majority of submissions, however, to favour not the comparison approach but rather the following as expressed by a student:

> As far as the marking system, I feel that each student should be graded according to what that student can do rather than be graded according to the standards of the class.

(Note: It appears that this attitude is in conflict with the findings regarding competition among students in the public attitude survey.)

On more than one occasion we were told that it is unfair for one teacher to pass his or her evaluation along to the next year's teacher. One contributor expressed it as follows:

> It is disturbing to me that each year information (derogatory) is handed onto the new teachers in a school who could give a child a 'fresh' look if they were not hampered by many of the prejudicial stories handed on in the 'coffee' hours of the teacher's room.

A few submissions were made suggesting that Department of Education Examinations should re-appear on the scene. Reasons for this were expressed as follows:

> It is thought that Department of Education exams should be written commencing in Grade VIII. Analysis of the results would assist in determining whether each school is meeting its obligation to provide an adequate education program.

And another:

> I am very disturbed by the disappearance of the departmental exams: I know they were unpopular with teachers but in my opinion the fact that they kept teachers conscious of the curriculum was a great advantage.

The foregoing view, of course, conflicts with those who suggested complete abolition of all examinations. It should be noted that suggestions were made for the introduction of University entrance examinations which, we were told, would de-emphasize the competition presently associated with Grade XII examinations.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLING

Few matters received as much attention as that of guidance counselling in the schools. The day is past when this related mainly to advice and direction as to one's vocation in life. Many, particularly professionals in the field, came forward with valuable background information, philosophy and suggestions as to what is generally considered to come under the umbrella of guidance counselling. If we were to single out a representative definition it would be one enunciated, we were told, by one of the local School Boards. It reads: "Guidance is a process in which assistance is given in order that people may deal more adequately with educational, vocational, personal or social problems."

We heard a strong call for the immediate extension of adequate counselling services into the elementary schools of the City. This came from a group of elementary school principals, from seven Home and School Associations in elementary schools, from a number of individuals as well as the Youth Section of the Saskatoon City Police Department. The following brief, prepared by four members of an elementary school staff adequately states what many expressed in a variety of ways:

> A school population is comprised of students with many and varied needs, not the least of which is the need for guidance counsellors actively involved as full time members of our school staff.
>
> Our request arises out of a situation in which we are faced with many emotional and social problems. The causes of these problems are:
>
> (1) Homes with only one parent.

(2) Families on welfare or out of work.
(3) Situations involving the police, welfare agencies and other institutions are not uncommon.
(4) Certain sectors of society are fairly mobile and this requires considerable testing, communications and orientation procedures.
(5) Lack of ability of both parents and teachers to cope with children because of the changing needs of society.

Due to these problems which students face we find:

(a) A significant percentage of students are academically retarded.
(b) Scores in basic skills such as arithmetic and language arts are considerably below grade level.

Individual teachers are inhibited in being effective in counselling students because of:

(a) The pupil-teacher ratio does not allow for individualized attention.
(b) Classroom teachers are not qualified in this specialized area of guidance.
(c) There is a need for interaction between student and counsellor apart from the classroom situation because of overt hostilities between teacher and student.

Many of these emotional and social problems begin in the early stages of a child's life. It is at this time when specialized attention should be provided and when more desirable results could be obtained. The public is presently concerned with the spiralling costs of education. However, the increased cost of guidance personnel in the formative stages of a child's life would decrease the possibility of him being a burden on society via jails, welfare institutions, mental hospitals, and other social services for which the public is presently being highly taxed. The public and all concerned should be made more aware of the end results of the "making do" with the shortage of psychologists and guidance counsellors in our system.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

The same need must of course be met in the high schools. It is obvious that to some extent this is now being done. This is not to say that the system at the high school level is perfect. Several reasons were advanced to account for present inadequacies. We were told, however, that in many instances the guidance counselling departments were understaffed and accordingly required additional personnel. A youth group from a Church stated another reason in written form:

> We would suggest that guidance counsellors be better qualified with better capacity to find rapport with the students. It would be desirable that the counsellors be

closer to the students' generation.

When asked for clarification at a public meeting, the spokesman of the group explained:

> Partly what we were trying to say was we felt the guidance counsellors in this school didn't really know what was going on in our generation. We sort of felt that they were too far away from knowing what was going on. Like, they can't really help with the drug trafficking in this school, or they can't really help with the people who are really confused and dropping out. They're there and it says 'guidance office - please walk in' on the door, but not many students really want to do this. There was a suggestion at our meeting last week that University students or students who had just graduated from University, or students that had graduated from Grade XII, would be excellent guidance counsellors. They just made the same mistakes within four or five years--they know what's going on and they can maybe help us with our problems.

Another high school student expressed his concern as follows:

> The point I was trying to make, I think that most students are afraid or not aware of what guidance counsellors can do for them. Guidance counsellors are in their office, and you have to go to the office, and knock on the door, and the door opens. You stand there and there is this big guy standing there and looking at you and says 'yes . . . what . . . can . . . . . I . . . do . . . for . . . you?' And most kids say 'ah . . . I'll come back a little later.' They're scared. They haven't any real idea of what you're going to do for them.

On the other hand, we had a high school Guidance Counsellor tell us that seventeen or eighteen out of every twenty students entering his office come of their own volition.

While it appears that considerable emphasis at the high school should be on the personal problem level, the vocational aspect remains very important. The student should be able to learn of the requirements of possible future employment and be given some exposure to the type of vocations that interest him. Some students expressed the view that they were not being adequately informed on entrance requirements with respect

to both University and trade schools. If these opinions should be representative then a remedying of this situation would certainly be called for. A student made what we thought was a positive suggestion when he said:

> A direct link with Canada Manpower should be set up in the School's guidance offices. Besides giving good career outlooks statistics, manpower can show what jobs are available for students who have decided to quit school.

We have not found the formula for the ideal guidance counsellor. Having excelled as a classroom teacher is not necessarily an assurance that guidance counselling is one's field. Further, the "problem", the "misfit" or the "unsatisfactory" must never be given this role. With the pressures upon the young generation of today it could perhaps be said that the position of guidance counsellor is the most important in the school--even more so than the principalship.

RESULTS FROM THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY - THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL

"Teachers should retire at an earlier age."

39% agree

"To a lot of teachers, teaching is just a job."

81% agree

"Teachers have a soft life."

18% agree

"Teachers have too many bosses."

42% agree

"Schools tend to be run for the educators rather than for those being educated."

50% agree

"Teachers salaries are too low."

34% agree

"Many teachers are clever at their own subjects but are unable to pass on their knowledge to students."

79% agree

"Teachers should take courses on new teaching methods and have to pass exams."

85% agree

"Students learn better working on group projects than working by themselves."

78% agree

"Small classrooms should be enlarged so that several classes can be together."

20% agree

"A teacher should have the freedom to teach a class the way he or she feels best."

83% agree

"Too many teachers just try to fill a student's head with facts."

60% agree

"A teacher should not be given the freedom to decide on what he or she is to teach."

43% agree

"Teachers tend to rely too much on school text books."

62% agree

"The grading system should be abolished."

49% agree

"In the classroom, encouraging competition among students is a good thing."

70% agree

"The student's performance during the year is more important than exam results."

86% agree

"The most important person in the classroom is the guidance counsellor."

53% agree

"There aren't enough guidance counsellors in the schools.

62% agree

"The guidance counsellors should not have to teach as well."

63% agree

SUMMARY - THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL

1. A well-trained teaching staff is considered essential. Particular attention in this matter should be directed to Division I.

2. An ability to attain academic success is not in itself a sufficient reason to allow for entry into the teaching profession. An interest in and a concern for the welfare of the individual student coupled with an ability to communicate with and challenge that student to work to his potential is of equal importance.

3. The quality of the teaching staff is the paramount concern on the part of the public as it seeks the best attainable education for its young people, with emphasis on buildings, teaching aids and the like being of secondary importance.

4. Because of the profound effect each teacher can have on the future of a student, procedures must be strengthened to assure as far as possible an absence of mediocrity in the practice and performance of the teaching profession. The teaching profession should continue to have the benefit of tenure legislation but there should be modifications to the law to ensure meaningful appraisal of performance both prior to the initial attainment of tenure and periodically during one's career thereafter.

5. The suggestion was made that a system of payment based on merit should be considered.

6. The role of the school principal is such a vital one that great care must be taken in appointments to such positions. There must be a recognition that every outstanding classroom teacher with a number of years service is not necessarily going to make an outstanding school administrator.

7. Communication between elementary and secondary school teachers is inadequate.

8. Confusion exists in the minds of many as to the nature of changes that have taken place in recent years in methods of teaching and the reasons that have prompted the changes.

9. The public will be receptive to changes in teaching methods if it is shown that:

(a) a human relationship between teacher and pupil is being maintained with encouragement of discussion and student participation; and

(b) it is expected, for good reason, by those proposing the change that an improvement in the educational process will result.

10. On the part of parents at least, the open classroom concept has not been well received.

11. A better utilization of community resources is desired, including such areas as out-of-doors education, field trips to industry and Government and specialty lectures by professionals.

12. The practice of acceleration has been brought into serious question, particularly because of problems it often entails for the child involved. Students should be kept as far as possible with their own age group for the twelve year period. Enrichment programs appeared to be a more satisfactory alternative.

13. Opinion on the merits of academic streaming, particularly at the high school level are so varied that it is impossible to suggest that there is a consensus one way or the other.

14. A progress evaluation must be made from time to time. The result of the evaluation must be communicated to the parents in an effective manner.

15. There should be a de-emphasis on the relative importance of examinations in making the evaluation, with greater emphasis on day to day achievement.

16. In the evaluation, emphasis should be given to the progress of the student according to his ability to achieve, rather than pitting him against his peers through various comparisons.

17. Guidance counselling is an essential service in our schools. There is a clear call for its introduction within the elementary school systems.

18. Personnel selected for guidance counselling must be carefully assessed for suitability with emphasis on an ability to communicate with students.

D. THE STUDENT AND THE SCHOOL

D. THE STUDENT AND THE SCHOOL

STUDENT VIEWPOINT

Student contributors, like other contributors to the inquiry, expressed their ideas and attitudes on a wide range of subjects. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to present every student concern here it is possible to present the student views which gained most frequent attention.

Freedom vs. Discipline - Student Attitude. A particular concern among the senior high school students who responded to the inquiry's invitation was one relating to the discipline vs. freedom controversy noted elsewhere in this report. Students, for the most part, stated that they would like more freedom from external control or direction in areas of curriculum selection, school attendance, topics of discussion and rules of behavior. While many noted that there has been some relaxation of school controls in these areas they did feel that more freedom would be desirable.

It is interesting to note, however, that even among the students there is dissent from this suggestion of further relaxation of external controls. The controversy reported elsewhere is apparent even among students but if measured in terms of numbers of students who expressed themselves to the Committee it is apparent that more students would advocate further relaxation of external controls and directions for students than would advocate the reverse.

One student, claiming that a further relaxation of external controls is warranted stated:

> If people begin to look at some of the completely idiotic rules set down for students, they begin to wonder if they [the students] ever left public school . . . The administrators like to tell everyone they are treated equally because we live in a democracy. As far as students are concerned school is far from democratic. Students are given the 'love it or leave it' choice.

This same student continued by saying:

> In some classes where on occasion the student is given the chance to express opinions [he] is cut down by the teachers. This . . . stifles involvement. I feel class involvement should be encouraged by teachers.

Another suggested that high school students should have freedom to select classes:

> In terms of subject selection, the student should be informed [about] what subjects are required for whatever field he will be entering, but thereafter the student, not parents or teachers, should choose his subjects.

Referring to classroom attendance one student commented that:

> When students have reached the high school level they should be able to decide if they can afford to miss a few classes. For some students they would be better off somewhere else than in a class that they could very easily catch up, especially if they have a lot of homework from other classes. As long as they don't expect the teachers to give them a lot of extra help they can only hurt themselves.

Another student reinforcing the above commented as follows:

> If he [the student] chooses to spend class time in the library or doing something else he should not be reprimanded and forced to fabricate a good excuse. Surely our system can allow for some flexibility of a student's mood and interest. By the time a person reaches the age of secondary schooling, his taste in clothing and style should be honored. The apathetic, irresponsible citizen is partially a result of the school system which never allowed him to make decisions concerning himself. The rebellious youth is often a student who sees open abandonment of established principles as the way in which he will finally achieve personal dignity and freedom.

This is not to suggest, however, that these contributors would wish these increased freedoms for all students. Almost all student contributors felt that these freedoms should be available only for mature students--students in their senior years of high school.

> Give the students <u>some</u> responsibility. At present we are told when to be in class, what class to be in

> at what time, and so on. . . . Give a student the choice of whether or not to attend class. . . . If he misses more than a certain percentage of classes make him drop that class. Let him make errors and let him learn from them. . . . I don't think that this responsibility should be loaded on grade nines or tens, but grade elevens and twelves could handle it.

It may be said then, that while all students do not agree that a further relaxation in school discipline would be beneficial, there are a majority of students who would wish it.

Relevancy. Another frequently expressed concern by students was a call for "relevancy" of subject material. A substantial number of student contributors felt that many of their subjects, particularly the compulsory subjects, are irrelevant to what they might wish to do after completing their schooling. One student expressed the concern somewhat representatively as follows:

> Although the cry of relevancy is an overworked cliche in [student] protest everywhere, its importance in education cannot be overemphasized. The inquiring mind can only be encouraged if the work offered is meaningful.

Semester System. A third major thrust of student opinion was a strong endorsement of the semester system. While some suggested that further refinements would be of benefit, almost without exception the semester system gained a high degree of student support. Some students suggested a better balance of "easy" and "hard" subjects to equalize the work load over the two semesters. Others felt that classroom assignments seemed to be more demanding under the semester system than under the old system and called for an easing of the work load.

Representative of student comments in this area are the following:

> I like the semester system very much because one can concentrate on a few subjects at a time and it gives you much more time to study.
>
> I like the idea of the semester system because the homework isn't as heavy at one time . . .
>
> [The semester] system seems to be far better than any other system.

Other Student Attitudes. Several other matters were brought forward by student contributors: An endorsement of the split-shift system, a recognition of student apathy, the in-appropriateness and unfairness of certain marking or grading systems, a call for a broader curriculum, particularly in the social sciences and fine arts, a better co-ordination of efforts of elementary schools and secondary schools, and a call for individualized and highly personal attention for each student.

While it might seem from the foregoing that students are highly dissatisfied with the present system of schooling, the committee does not feel this to be the case. For the most part student contributors felt that Saskatoon schools are very "likeable" and good--but that some attention is needed in the areas noted. One minor concern expressed by two students may hold the key to understanding the nature of the comments made by others. These two suggested that school authorities should be highly communicative and understanding of a student's individual circumstances. These students felt that there should be an appropriate place to go where student complaints and suggestions would be aired. If such a body were readily available to students perhaps they could feel more secure and self-directing.

> There should be someone or some place where students could go to air their legitimate complaints. . . . [This someone or some place] should have the power to investigate and correct the problems.

DISCIPLINE vs. FREEDOM - COMMUNITY ATTITUDE

Areas of Concern. The general public also paid a great deal of attention to the discipline vs. freedom aspect of Saskatoon schools. How many restrictions should teachers and schools place on students? How many rules and regulations should there be governing a student's conduct? How much freedom from external control or direction should be granted to students? This subject, it soon became apparent, generally evoked a highly emotional response and no small amount of controversy. This is probably because everyone has his own view about freedom.

We must also mention, by way of introduction, that the concepts of freedom and discipline were frequently left undefined. Contributors would suggest, for example, that more rigid discipline is needed, or that more freedom is needed but would often leave the interpretation of the matter to the Inquiry committee.

Among those who did specify the types of discipline or freedom they advocated there appeared to be five broad areas of concern. These are presented as follows:

1. Curriculum areas

   Range of Suggestions - The students should be required to study basic subjects; or the students should have free choice in the selection of courses for study.

2. School Attendance

   Range of Suggestions - The students should be required to attend school and classes; or, the students should be free to decide whether or not to attend school or class.

3. Performance

Range of Suggestions - The students should be under pressure to produce results; or, the student should be free to work at his own pace.

4. Topics of Discussion

Range of Suggestions - The students should not be allowed to waste time in discussion of matters unrelated to the course or curriculum; or, the students should be free to discuss any and all matters of importance to him however controversial these subjects may be.

5. Rules of Behavior

Range of Suggestions - The student should comply with the school rules and regulations of behavior; or, the student should be allowed the freedom to behave as his or her conscience would dictate.

It became apparent, therefore, that the controversy over discipline vs. freedom in Saskatoon schools centers around the question of how much freedom from external control or direction should be granted to students in the above matters.

Public attitude in the area of discipline vs. freedom was divided into three main groups. There are those, on one hand, who would suggest that schools should enforce more rigid discipline in student matters. Another group exists who would favor the granting of more freedom to the student. A third group exists who would suggest that students should be allowed more freedom only when they are ready to accept the responsibility of

exercising their freedom well. (This is perhaps, an over-simplification of positions taken by the contributors as an overlapping from one group to another in different matters did occur.)

The first group of contributors, including some students, thought that there should be more rigid discipline in the schools. They felt that more external control and direction of students would be beneficial. They suggested, for example, that students should be required to study certain basic subjects so that fundamental skills and knowledge would be acquired. In addition, they suggested that students should be "pushed" academically so that they will produce and so that they will learn their subjects thoroughly. They commented that students should learn to respect their teachers and learn to respect and obey the rules governing behavior which have been established by the schools. In addition, they felt that students should learn to respect and obey the rules of society at large. One student wrote this:

> [T]he breakdown in rules has caused students to be lazy; students don't have to make sacrifices any more. They have no respect for themselves and show little concern for others. . . . I feel that high school students are not mature enough to operate in a 'laissez-faire' atmosphere. . . . Students need rules and discipline to develop habits which are needed in the outside world.

A parent commented this way:

> If you don't give them [the students] a solid frame-work of reference with an appropriate reward and punishment system, you [the parents and school] are sloughing off your responsibility as a decision maker onto them and this is just not fair.

Other comments from various contributors which may be taken as somewhat representative of this first group are as follows:

> [Young people cannot] be allowed to proceed at their own speed. It is axiomatic that human beings work only as fast as they have to unless they are doing something they enjoy. I would agree that a particular topic should be made as interesting as possible but to some, mathematics, for example, will always be an undesirable experience. But it does not follow from this that a person should be allowed to proceed 'at his own speed' or, even worse, that he should be given the choice of studying or not studying mathematics. This lack of imposition of discipline could leave a gap in a student's education which may never be filled and which he will later regret having. Thus discipline and firm guidance are necessary components of education.
>
> The students work should be planned, the student should not be left to work at his own speed. . . . A little more pushing on the part of the teacher is needed.
>
> I'd be in favor of more discipline in the schools with prompt communication with the parents if the student is causing a disturbance within the classroom . . .
>
> . . . There is no way I want my child to attend a school where there is no discipline or order. I don't feel the teachers should beat the children to a pulp, but they should certainly be able to have some way to show authority and to get the children's respect.
>
> [T]he school has reneged upon its obligation a complex society has placed upon it if it abandons its responsibility and tells the student - pick your own content and do your own thing. . . . The schools are obligated to take a stand against those who would have their will regardless of the infringement of the rights of others.
>
> [Schools] must assume that individuals need to grow, need to have direction in their growth, and, where necessary, impose penalties upon the non-co-operative.

The second group would suggest that students are not presently allowed sufficient freedom. Too many rules and restrictions are imposed on students when in fact, they claim, the students should have freedom in any and all educational pursuits. This group would suggest that the student have the freedom of choice of course; freedom to attend or not to attend school or classes; freedom to work at his own pace; freedom

to discuss and to probe into matters without restriction; and freedom to express his individuality and creativity. After all, claims one contributor, "education is not something a person should be forced into." Such freedom would develop within the individual, they contend, a sense of responsibility and self direction and would prevent the feeling of alienation and de humanization that they claim students are presently experiencing.

Representative of this group might be the following comments from six respondents:

> Schools must introduce students to the use of their minds for themselves and for sheer enjoyment, by encouraging responsibility and self-discipline. . . . This objective is part of the modern school system, but the present rigid class structure--especially in the high schools--does not aid the development of these abilities. . . .
>
> [There is] too much regimentation and conformity. All children are expected to fit into a certain slot. . . . Children are not given the opportunity of self discipline or allowed to explore themselves. They are disciplined by external forces often negative in spirit.
>
> Society has no right to compel pupils to conform to any regimented school system.
>
> A major objective of education should be to increase the independence of the pupils in the direction and conduct of their own learning. . . .
>
> A variety of . . . methods or combinations of methods might be made available to students so that some choice in learning method is possible. When courses are taken in school, the teacher should be an optional rather than a compulsory reference. . . . It is important that in our world [the students] learn to identify and solve problems on their own.
>
> I am in favor of a good deal of freedom for the individual student including the freedom to dress in any manner consistent with society's laws of decency, freedom to have his hair any length he likes, freedom to indulge in political discussion and activity, freedom not to do his homework and freedom to fail with dignity.

The third and largest group of contributors suggested that students should be granted additional freedom as they accept and demonstrate increased responsibilities for their education. Some rules and restrictions should be removed gradually as the student matures and as he develops a sense of responsibility and self direction. One commented that:

> . . . to grow into responsible, socially aware people, children should take more responsibility for educating themselves. Since freedom and responsibility go hand in hand I would like to see students given as much freedom in choosing their program of studies as they are able to handle at any given time.

Another commented that:

> . . . children are largely at the receiving end of this process, especially in the earliest years but obviously they need an atmosphere at school and at home which will allow them gradually to develop the ability to make their own decisions.

Several comments representing this third viewpoint are as follows:

> Students should be free to become individuals: freedom should be given out hand in hand with responsibility and taken away if abused. . . . Freedom is the road to maturity.

> An attempt should be made to teach the child to develop more responsibility for his own education as he grows older. In this way compulsory attendance may not be necessary in the last years of high school.

> I am not advocating free schools as such. Certain order must be maintained but not for its own sake. As arbitrary rules are relaxed, most students lose the desire to rebel. [Our high school] is an example of where regulations were negotiated between students and staff, the students themselves supplying the necessary pressure to bring most transgressors into line.

At what stage then, would this third group suggest that the student is ready to accept the responsibility of being granted more freedom than now exists? It varies. Basically they would suggest, we feel, that the senior years in high school are appropriate, depending

both upon the individual student and the nature of the "freedom" to be granted.

We can summarize these ideas then by stating that while some citizens feel that there should be more discipline (external control and direction) in the schools and while others suggest that students should be granted an increased amount of freedom, a third body of citizens feels that there may be a "meeting" point. This group (the latter) which encompasses a large number of individuals are prepared to suggest that students should be granted increased freedom as they accept the responsibility for that freedom. These citizens would encourage more student self direction in specific areas of school activity. They would suggest that students who accept the responsibility for their education should be released from some controls and imposed directions.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS

If students are to have additional freedom by what means should it be brought about? Should schools just discontinue certain rules of behavior? Can the students have a voice in the development of their role in the school? Of particular concern here is the number of submissions which are critical of Student Representative Councils. (It became apparent that contributors thought primarily in terms of high school Student Representative Councils.)

The primary concern voiced in submissions to the Inquiry is that these Councils are elected merely on the basis of "popularity contests". It is claimed that these Councils are not presently an effective means of voicing student opinion; they may act as a dance committee or they may determine where student funds are to go, but they do not serve a purpose in relating student concerns to the

teaching staff. Moreover, it was observed more than once that the staff "advisor" to the Student Representative Council in fact vetoes any positive suggestions that the committee may make that departs from the status quo.

The following comments to the inquiry concerning Student Representative Councils are indicative of the type of statements received:

> Student councils are a sham--they are in effect dance committees. Student council elections are personality contests with no serious discussion of the problems facing students since student councils have no power anyway.
>
> An average S.R.C. spends its time deciding what percentage of student fees go to what clubs and activities, trying to squeeze an extra dance out of the administration, and possibly even trying for a smoking lounge. It is because of these priorities that this experiment with democracy is a total failure. It is also because of the lack of any issues that this election becomes nothing more than a popularity contest . . .
>
> The student government should first be free of the teacher's 'advisor' who, with his veto power is actually the real 'student' representative.

It is of interest here to note that despite a formal invitation to each of the Student Representative Councils in Saskatoon high schools, not one chose to respond to the Inquiry's request. Not one Student Representative Council made a presentation outlining student concerns in their school. (The Inquiry Committee subsequently explored other and more effective means of gaining knowledge of student concerns.)

We must acknowledge the efforts of all those Student Representative Council's past and present who have worked long and hard hours to effect their wishes. But the idea is apparent that the present structure of the Student Representative Councils in Saskatoon schools is not considered effective as a voice for student concerns; nor do these councils appear to play any effective role in running the school.

RESULTS FROM THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY - THE STUDENT AND THE SCHOOL

The young people of Saskatoon (ages sixteen to nineteen) were surveyed as a separate group in the total survey. Their opinion is included in the Saskatoon sample that we have used throughout this report. In this section of the report in particular we thought it of special interest to supply comparative opinions.

	Young People	Saskatoon
"There are a lot of unnecessary regulations in schools."	77% agree	49% agree
"Schools are unfair to the students."	31% agree	21% agree
"Students have too much freedom."	11% agree	41% agree
"There is not enough discipline in the schools."	18% agree	47% agree
"Boys in school should be made to have their hair short."	6% agree	40% agree
"Students should be allowed to smoke in the classrooms if they want to."	32% agree	11% agree
"High school students should be allowed to choose their own curriculum."	93% agree	73% agree
"There should be no compulsory subjects in high school."	59% agree	32% agree
"Most students enjoy going to school."	60% agree	78% agree

Young People	Saskatoon
"Sixteen and seventeen year old students <u>are</u> treated like adults in the school."	
47% agree	49% agree
"Senior high school students should have a say in the running of the school."	
84% agree	57% agree
"The principal only meets the student when the student has done something wrong."	
71% agree	49% agree
"Those who run the schools rely a lot on the Students' Representative Council."	
30% agree	22% agree
"The opinions of the Students' Representative Council carry a lot of weight with those in authority."	
48% agree	43% agree
"The elections for the Students' Representative Councils are just popularity contests."	
69% agree	60% agree
"The semester system is a very good one."	
95% agree	87% agree
"It's a good idea to have students going to school in shifts."	
49% agree	37% agree

SUMMARY - THE STUDENT AND THE SCHOOL

1. Most senior high school students in Saskatoon schools are basically satisfied with the present school system(s) but they do feel that some changes must be made.

2. Contributing students recommend a greater degree of student self-direction as it relates to class selection, school attendance and rules for behavior. Students suggest that a high degree of self-direction should be available to senior high school students with lesser amounts available to lower years.

3. Students wish to study material which they feel is relevant to their lives and future pursuits.

4. Students endorse the semester system and this is in line with community thinking.

5. Public opinion is not polarized on the extremes of student regimentation or total student freedom. There appears to be weight in favour of a "meeting point" between those who advocate more external controls and directions for students and those who advocate more student freedom. This meeting point would appear to be that senior high school students could be granted additional freedom from external control and direction as they demonstrate an increased sense of responsibility for their schooling.

6. Student Representative Councils are not considered effective in communicating student concerns to school authorities.

E. THE PARENT AND THE SCHOOL

E. THE PARENT AND THE SCHOOL

PARENTAL CONCERNS - REPORTING

Much public attention is focused upon the parents and their relationship to the school. Among the comments relating to this subject which gained repeated expression was a concern that parents should be provided with more information, both by teachers and the school.

There were those who wished only that teachers would provide the parents with more or better information about his or her child. They expressed the concern that they would like to be better informed about their child's progress, strengths and weaknesses, and his interests. Some felt that the parent-teacher interview is an effective tool in achieving this goal but did note some shortcomings. In addition, it was suggested that an easily interpreted, written report, dealing only in concrete fact is also necessary. Furthermore, some would like teachers to better inform parents as to how they might help their child in his schoolwork.

> The ideal reporting system would be a combination of teacher-parent interviews, marks and students standing in the class. Report cards which merely state that the students' performance in a class is satisfactory, or that he is working to the best of his ability, fail to give the parent guidance on the direction in which the child should be encouraged. Furthermore, it is unfair to the child not to give him an assessment of his limitations, which he will eventually learn about in later life.

The suggestion has been made that during a parent-teacher interview or a portion of it at least, the child should be in attendance.

A few briefs expressed criticism based on a negative experience during a parent-teacher interview, representative of which is the following:

> I would like better teacher-parent interviews. Both of us are on best behavior, nervous and neither will admit ignorance. If I object to a subject, or if I wish to find a reason for my child's changed behavior I should not be subjected to skepticism. I am very tired of the old cliche 'it's not the same as when you went to school', or 'we don't do that anymore'.

Some conflict exists over the manner of communicating marks to parents. Some suggest the percentage system, others the alphabetical expression. Others question the content of the written report itself, one parent expressing her concern as follows:

> Another area of lack of communication is that of reporting progress. The present non-specific, twice yearly reports are most inadequate. A common report we have received on our children runs something like this - 'your child is doing very well, is pleasant in the classroom I wish all my pupils were like that.' Fine. But how much does he know? He is going to school to learn. If so, shouldn't we know what he is learning and how well he is learning it?

The real concern of parents that we sensed in this entire area is perhaps represented by the parent who expressed himself as follows:

> The first point we would make is that the format of the reports have changed each year and have changed in such a way that it makes comparison of our daughter's progress over the years very difficult, if not impossible. . . . It has been suggested to us that there is no need for reports to be issued at all in view of the fact that parent-teacher interviews can always be arranged. We disagree very strongly with this attitude on two grounds. Firstly many parents will find it difficult to get to these interviews during school hours and secondly because it is more difficult for teachers to be completely objective in personal discussions with parents than it is in a formal report. It is difficult to foresee reports ever becoming redundant and it would seem advisable for each school to have a standard report format if only to reduce the degree of subjectivity of student rating between successive teachers. If changes in the reporting procedures become necessary, as they must from time to time, then they should be adequately explained to parents and should be no less informative than the preceding method.

A professional group reflected the view of many when they said,

> . . . the parent-teacher interview is most satisfactory but with the high mobility rate of our population today the child also needs the security of a written basic reporting standard.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS

Some felt that the school could better inform its community about matters of interest in the school. Such information as programs or courses offered, teaching methods or current problems facing the school could be passed along to local parents. An area of considerable concern is that, in many i tances, there is not the free flow of information that parents feel should be present. The reasons why this is so appear to vary from one situation to another. There appears to be present a genuine desire on the part of parents to keep abreast of the progress of their children. While considerable favourable comment has been made about the parent-teacher interview technique, it is obvious that it has not yet been refined to the point where a free and frank exchange takes place. While the teaching profession is undoubtedly as anxious as parents are to open freely the communication lines, there are instances where parents feel that they are not met with openness on raising their concerns. Some parents feel restrained about offering criticism lest it, in effect, be held against members of their families. Representative of responses that have led us to make these comments are the following.

From a community association:

> Because of the fact that parents are not always able to ascertain from their children what is happening to them at school, the school should assume more responsibility for keeping parents informed of the school situation.

Parents should be provided with an outline of the courses that their children are taking, particularly at the secondary level, the texts and hours of work expected in each course, so that they can assist their children in their school work.

Parents should also be advised on the extent of social problems amongst school children, such as theft, drop-outs, sex and drugs. Every effort should be made by the School Boards to develop effective plans to minimize these problems and parents should be made aware of such plans.

From a parent:

It seems impossible to know what is offered in instruction except by cross-examining our children (a most inaccurate technique). Most teachers insist it is too time-consuming to inform the parents. An exception to this was a year one teacher, who, for the first term sent home weekly news letters explaining what the children had covered in the skill subjects. I see this form of communication extremely valuable from a parents' point of view. It is impossible to commend or criticize when one doesn't know the scope of instruction.

From a parent:

Parent-teacher relations to be put on a more personal basis with avoidance of large-group discussions in which the teachers 'talk' to the parents but never have time to listen. Seminars and panel discussions, committees and study groups to be used to develop a solid and worthwhile exchange.

From a comment made at one of our public meetings:

As a parent it is my feeling that it is very difficult to get any hearing at the school if one criticizes. The teachers are very much on the defensive. We are told that the school wants to know what we think. They want us to work along with them as a member of a team, but I find they really want to hear from us as long as we agree with them; as long as we do not criticize anything they do.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parallel to the wish for more information is the desire that parents and other citizens could be more actively involved in the school program. Almost without exception those who addressed themselves

to the role of the parent in the school called for increased parental involvement. "Educators have long held that parent involvement can greatly improve the educational process," claims one contributor, and suggests further that ". . . ALL we ask is the opportunity to work closely with educators so that we both might carry out our responsibilities more effectively."

The nature and extent of the involvement indicated varies from one submission to another but basically the concerns may be presented as follows. Some contributors felt that involvement should extend only to the parents taking an active interest in the education of their child. This group felt that parents should be allowed and encouraged to visit in the classroom and that in addition, they would not only be informed but also consulted in matters affecting their child's educational program (e.g. curriculum, teaching methods, and the teaching of moral or religious values'. One contributor, noting a difficulty in bringing this about, stated that "parents who would like to take an active part in their children's schooling often have a very limited possibility to do so".

To some citizens the extent of involvement goes beyond this. A particularly strong emphasis was placed by contributors on the use of voluntary assistants in the schools. They stated that community involvement, and more particularly parental involvement, on a voluntary basis should be encouraged. A variety of uses were suggested including lunchroom supervision, playground supervision, assisting teachers with supervision on class excursions and field trips, reading to primary grade groups while teachers are engaged in other more demanding activities, assisting with instruction in specific areas were one's special knowledge and training could prove useful (e.g. science, social

studies, physical education, or art . It should be noted that not only were parents suggested as a potential source for volunteer assistance, but older or more advanced students as well as retired citizens or other interested community members were also recommended. Some suggested that the School Boards should examine the feasibility of training parents or other volunteer assistants so that they could be utilized more effectively in the classroom setting.

Several submissions directed to the Inquiry would indicate that, to a considerable extent, citizens hold the view that the parent's role should go much farther. Parents wish to be observers and to be consulted in matters of importance to their own child, but they do not wish to limit themselves to providing voluntary assistance only. These people would suggest that parental opinion should be sought and utilized in a decision-making role, both at the local school and board level. They feel that parents should be consulted and actively participate in making decisions about educational aims and objectives, curriculum planning, and teaching methods or practices. "Parents today should become an integral part of school life," suggested one citizen group. "As parents we feel that we share a collective responsibility with the Board, and educators, for the education of our children," commented another group. The statement of one contributor which can be said to be reasonably representative of a point of view held by others was this: "Decisions regarding curriculum, school philosophies, local priorities and the like, should be made by the people, and not left to administration staff and professional educators, though certainly the advice of the professionals should be sought and carefully weighed."

To summarize this point then, the Committee has found that

a large number of citizens expect that parents should become more involved in educational matters in Saskatoon schools. They feel that they should be informed and consulted in matters affecting their children's education. A strong feeling exists that parents and other interested citizens should be used as volunteer assistants in the schools. To a lesser extent, parents wish to contribute in some way to making decisions about school programs and practices and School Board policies.

At present, the Home and School Associations represent the one possible means for the parents to become involved with the school in a community way. It was suggested that this involvement is far from adequate. Those who represent the home in this association have the feeling of being a lesser partner--rather even more a servant than a partner. Some seek a more responsible arrangement. One citizen made the following comment:

> The real issue is how much [parents] may be able to do in a school if they are not relegated to the 'servants' jobs. The Home and School which I have been involved in were auxiliary in nature because of the way they operated and their constitution.
>
> I do not believe that community involvement can occur effectively unless two changes take place. The first is some sort of legal recognition or motion by the Boards, that the community can have a voice in the schools. . . .
>
> The second change which is a prerequisite for community involvement is the commitment of a school's staff to this idea and the beginning of the necessarily-slow process of working out an arrangement suitable to the personalities concerned. This is a recognition of the impossibility of imposing this kind of change on people; rather the opportunity would be made available.

One woman who urged home and schools to seek their proper role warned against wasting their energies in "spending all their time

on busywork such as fun fairs, rinks, bake sales, and talks on "My Trip to Russia".

It is apparent that the public feels a need for a more adequate forum for the presentation of ideas, the airing of complaints and the redress of grievances. One parent described the problem and reflected on it as follows:

> Feed-back from the community to the school system has been lacking in any formal sense until the Citizen's School Inquiry was set up. I believe this is an essential 'step' in having a better educational system. I use the word 'step' because I hope that the process begun in this way will be continued in some form or other. I generally sense that people feel powerless to influence the school system. . . .
>
> Conversations with some of the elected members of the Boards (present and past) have led me to believe that there is a great need for people to be able to contact someone when problems, crises or opportunities for change affect their children. . . . I propose that an impartial, respected member of the community, who was well versed in educational matters should serve as an 'ombudsman' for the system. We, as a society, are recognizing the need for ombudsmen as a check and balance on bureaucratic functioning and I submit, that in the vital and crucial area of education, such a role should be filled.

RESULTS FROM THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY - THE PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL

"Parents should have the opportunity to meet their child's teacher early in the first term."

95% agree

"The only times the school contacts parents is when there is something wrong."

62% agree

"Parents tend to feel uncomfortable when talking to teachers."

56% agree

"Parents should be allowed to observe in the classrooms."

69% agree

"Parents should not be involved in how the school is run."

22% agree

"Any decision to be made about a student's curriculum or course should be a joint one of the student, the teacher and the parents."

88% agree

"Parents should be prepared to put in time on behalf of their child's school."

85% agree

SUMMARY - THE PARENT AND THE SCHOOL

1. It is felt that parents should be provided with more information about the program and progress of their child. The parent-teacher interview is viewed favourably by parents but they would also like the security of a basic, written report which is easily interpreted and which deals only in concrete facts. It is suggested that these written reports should have a format which is to some extent standardized.

2. It is felt that parents should be better informed by the classroom teacher and by the school about the teaching program offered, teaching methods employed, and the problems currently faced by the school.

3. There is a strong call by parents for an increased amount of parental involvement in the school program. Parents wish to be allowed to visit the classroom freely and to be included in the classroom setting as volunteer assistants. Some wish to play a more active role in the school by serving as a consultant in the decision-making process.

4. It is suggested that home and school associations should become a stronger and more responsible body for voicing parental concerns to the school.

5. Parents, as well as students, expressed a desire for an appropriate forum for presenting ideas and airing complaints.

F. ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT ISSUES

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EARLY EDUCATION

A few presentations asked for assistance for those parents who have a desire to prepare a child for school in his earlier years, but are unsure of how to proceed. One person expressed concern "that very early intellectual development is so rapid, [and] . . . attitudes are gained before age three and strengthened to age seven." A group suggested a possible procedure: "primary consultants [could] act as resource people for seminars in child development and demonstrations on methods that parents can use in developing skills and concepts in their pre-school children".

Aware that there were on-going studies in this area, the Inquiry at the outset made no special effort to encourage response on the subject of kindergarten. Nevertheless, as the hearings progressed, response became very significant, running two-thirds in favour of publicly-supported kindergartens throughout the city. Respondents demanded equal opportunities for all, qualified staff, a strengthened and standardized curriculum, low enrolment (not more than 20), and continued in-service training for kindergarten teachers. Many saw advantages in kindergarten: for example, as a diagnostic clinic for early recognition of mental, emotional and learning problems, or as a place which "helps children to manage themselves and grow physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually," and assists them "to find a comfortable contributing place in [their] world." Despite their insistence on its importance and universal availability, most felt that kindergarten should not be compulsory.

The approximate one-third opposing universally available kindergarten did not all give the same reasons for their opposition. One dismissed the whole program as a "waste of time and money," asserting that the first two months of Grade One repeats kindergarten. Others felt that parents should have the option of choosing other early programs (e.g. music, art, dance, swimming) in preference to kindergarten. The opposition of a large group centered around the question of priorities. Acknowledging that there is a limit to the finances available, these respondents preferred that available monies be directed first of all to the developing of the best Division One program possible.

There was considerable feeling expressed regarding the importance of Division One, "the years when the most crucial learning takes place." Priority was sought here in such factors as emphasis on small classes and individual attention, and the hiring of teachers with the highest academic qualifications. One group expressed their feelings as follows: "For primary grades especially, provide the best qualified staff, keep classes small, concentrate remedial reading specialists and speech therapists on the younger students, and assign non-professional duties to non-teachers."

One person sought greater freedom for the Grade One teacher to depart from certain standard school rules; it was thought that children should be introduced to the full day of school gradually, according to the individual child's ability to adjust to the new situation.

There appears to be growing interest in enrolling children in school at an earlier age, reflecting the practice presently followed in some European countries. Television has had a great impact on pre-school children (e.g. Sesame Street); they seem to be better prepared

for academic work than children of a generation ago. It was suggested by one respondent that children of four to five years have the cognitive abilities to engage in academic pursuits.

PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO

A significant number of briefs showed concern for pupil-teacher ratios. In asking for lower ratios, they made the following observations:

1. The lowest ratio should be maintained in Division One.

2. Low ratios should exist in certain subject areas, such as Art, French and Language Arts.

3. The present low ratios in special education should be maintained.

4. The use of the term "pupil-teacher ratio" is unsatisfactory. Parents do not want to be misled by figures which have been averaged; they want to be told whether in working out the ratio, other than full-time classroom teachers have been included. What parents really want, is to know that there is a limit to the number of children assigned to a particular teacher in a particular classroom.

This significant appeal for lower numbers in classrooms was based solely on one argument: concern for the child as an individual. One parent said:

> For learning basic skills . . . individualized teaching programs are more successful. It is difficult [for the teacher] to cope adequately with large groups of students.

A home and school said:

> Many of the student's problems could be solved by more individual attention. Integration of children with special needs in regular classrooms would be facilitated through smaller classes.

Another home and school said that lower numbers enable the teacher "to more readily asses each student's work [and] to be available to help

in problem areas." And another group commented, "Individualized relevant education cannot take place with the present size of classes."

ADULT EDUCATION

The participation of the publicly-funded systems of education in Adult Education was discussed by a few respondents. The need was expressed by one man who had had only a Grade Three education as follows: "Where do we go? I can name you a lot of people who have bigger problems than I have maybe, but still have no place to go."

An extension of the present evening classes was suggested. Another person requested "that the Boards make a policy of welcoming adults to any classes which they wish to attend, at no cost," having in mind the unemployed who are free during the day, but who are apprehensive about attending regular classes.

It was suggested by one group that the Boards support the work of the Saskatoon Council for Continuing Education. The same group asked that the Boards accept responsibility for a "continual assessment of educational needs," with the purpose of locating and offering assistance to "those segments of our population who are relatively disadvantaged."

The question of school leaving age was commented on by several respondents. In the main, and with reference to secondary education only, they asked that students be allowed to drop out legally at any time, with the option of returning as serious students at the beginning of any term.

RESOURCE CENTRES

A significant number of people stressed the importance of good school libraries or resource centres. It was generally agreed that all schools should have resource centres, with trained library staff, some on a part-time basis, in charge of them. Further, it was stated that adequate stocks of books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials (such as filmstrips, film loops, sound recordings and tapes, pictures, photographic slides, maps, charts, overhead transparencies) should be provided for all schools. It was argued by a home and school group that adequately stocked and properly staffed resource centres "are prerequisite to implementation of the individual-centred philosophy of education which is recognized as necessary and desirable today, and which is the official philosophy for education in Saskatoon."

Reference was made by several groups - school librarians and home and school associations - to Standards for Library Service for Canadian Schools as a guideline for future development. Specifically, these groups emphasized the need in schools for professional teacher-librarians; for large budgets ($5.00 per student for books and the same for audio-visual materials); for clerical assistants in large libraries; and for more space to accommodate students in the resource centres.

School librarians drew attention to training requirements. They stressed that "teaching qualifications and experience are essential to running an effective [media centre] programme in a school situation." In addition, however, they recommended "that local school boards establish a policy whereby teacher-librarians would be required to take at least three undergraduate classes in library science as a condition

of retaining their positions as teacher-librarians." They recommended, too, that all teachers have some library training, that "all prospective teachers be required to take at least one class related to the effective use of Learning Resource Centres", and, at the high school level, "that a vigorous in-service training program for all teachers be introduced to insure the utilization of facilities to their maximum capacity." They explained: "We have found that many teachers do not use the resources that are presently available and do not know that they exist . . ."

BUILDINGS, FACILITIES AND THEIR USES

Many respondents expressed the desire that school buildings with their facilities be given over to other uses when vacated by the students. These "other uses" varied: community socials, money-raising projects, church services, community recreation activities, community evening classes, father-son workshops. It was noted that presently forty schools are involved in recreation programs of the community, mostly in physical education activity; it was suggested that with a wider use of school facilities, programs might well be developed for those not so athletically inclined. One brief recommended "that school facilities be publicized as available to all community groups at nominal cost."

Several persons and groups opted to encourage the concept of facilities shared by community and school. This concept was also urged by the City's Parks and Recreation Department, who made some suggestions as a basis for discussion:

> 1. Establish a policy and contract whereby there can be increased use of school gymnasium, classrooms, workshops, science rooms, etc...for recreation programmes and at the same time expand school use of other recreation facilities.

2. Establish an agreement whereby use of existing equipment may be made possible in both the schools and community facilities.

. . . .

4. That there be joint planning and financing in the development of new areas involving park, playground and school . . .

Another brief supported the concept of developing schools within community buildings. It was suggested that such a plan might not reduce the capital cost of construction, but it should give a better dollar value in that a greater variety of facilities for education and recreation would be available locally.

Another proposal for sharing school facilities, which a few contributors endorsed, was that the separate and public school system combine. A few wanted the two systems to come under one board, while others would have the systems remain separate, but would have students from both systems in the same neighborhood share the same school building, in particular the library, gymnasium and play areas. Advantages claimed for sharing facilities were mainly reduced capital costs and a better level of staffing and school consultants.

A further suggestion for controlling costs was that standard designs for schools should be adopted. A number of briefs stated also that multi-storey buildings under a single roof are more economical than are single-storey buildings and should therefore be adopted.

Other suggestions were that "teachers and administrators who will be using the new school facilities" be consulted about new school designs. Further, a thought was expressed that "new schools be planned to reflect the newer approaches to teaching and learning," and that they should be climate controlled.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO THE BOARDS

Public Relations. A number of citizens feel that more should be known about school board activities and policies. There was favourable reaction to the holding of school board meetings from time to time in neighborhood schools. Clearly the public expects that school board meetings will be open to all. It was felt by some that better publicity might be given to the time, location and agenda of board meetings. One citizen, drawing on her experience in circulating a petition in early 1972, said:

> It is not generally known when the boards meet, where, whether the public is invited to any or all of the Boards' meetings and what is on the agenda.

It was apparent that a number of people do want to know more about the school system, how the Boards operate and arrive at their policy decisions. The parents of children in one of the elementary schools stated:

> We would like the School Board to provide every new parent with an information booklet which, besides giving basic rules and vital facts, should state the Boards' ways of operating and its education policies. . .
>
> We would further like to see a continuation of the T.V. programs presented last season by the School Board.

Comments such as the following would appear to point to the need for an on-going public relations program instituted at Board level:

> The credibility gap between what happens in the schools and the public's knowledge and expectation of the same, is growing. . . and the public sympathy for education and its vague or non-existent aims and objectives, is decreasing.

Finances. Several contributors expressed concern about the increasing cost of education. One of those who communicated with us expressed his concerns as follows:

> Enormous funds are currently being directed to the school systems and include about two-thirds of municipal taxes as well as large portions of provincial and federal funds. If possible, the rates of taxation for this purpose should be decreased and they should certainly not be increased. In order to achieve the desired education objectives, it will be necessary to periodically review and modify objectives and to institute economies wherever possible.

This person went on to list potential economies and his list included the following:

(1) Co-operation with other Canadian school systems in limiting the number of designs available;

(2) A single architect for the school systems;

(3) Multi-level schools;

(4) Abolition of frills in construction.

One person who was interviewed on this subject stated as follows:

> The most important aspect of the school systems now is cleaning house and coming up with alternatives to what exists today in order to reduce the present overall cost, for the taxpayers cannot continue indefinitely in spending an increasing portion of their tax dollar in the field of education without any apparent increase in the quality of the product. In other words I don't think my children are being any better educated than I was in my time. I just don't think we are getting the most for our tax dollar.

Almost all others who complained about costs directed their attention to construction and building costs. The theme seemed to be that if more money is required for our school systems it should be obtained through a sacrificing of capital expenditures on buildings and equipment.

At the same time there appears to be a trend in favour of accepting increased expenditures if the additional money is to be used for teaching and instruction purposes. Three home and school associations led

the way in this trend. Representative portions of their three briefs follow.

1. No expense should be spared at the Division One level to see that classes are very small, insuring the individual attention necessary for mastery of the basic skills, as with these further learning will follow naturally. These remarks often coincided with the thought that capital expenditures on buildings and equipment should be sacrificed, if necessary, to attain this end.

2. We must get around to a lower pupil-teacher ratio. Parents voted solidly in favour of this even though it was pointed out that increased costs thus incurred would mean increased taxes. They are willing to pay such increases.

3. Those in favour of increased taxes stressed curriculum improvements such as broader art education; greater emphasis on classics; introduction of French to all schools; more creative opportunity; more student involvement; self-direction and self-discipline.

The source of additional financing was dealt with by a number of correspondents. For a majority of them property taxes must not be increased. They suggest that if the cost of education is to be increased the additional funds should be assessed mainly on the basis of ability to pay. Comments include the following from one home and school association:

> The tax base for education should, however, be shifted in the direction of ability to pay, and should not be as exclusively on property tax.

Another home and school said:

> Because of recent discussions re the re-distribution of sources for educational financing the parents were asked if they were prepared to pay higher property and/or income taxes. Of the less than thirty parents who answered this question ten were in favour of increased property tax, sixteen were in favour of increased income tax.

Still another home and school association closed its submission to us with the response to the following question, which had been submitted to its members:

> Are you willing to pay more to get what you want?
>
> 83% of the people who answered this question said YES.

There were a variety of other suggestions: that some school tax relief should be afforded to the elderly; that non-taxpaying parents should have a voice and vote on expenditures; that taxes should be paid directly to the school board rather than to the municipal government; that a portion of the taxes paid by a parent be refunded to him if his children pursue their education outside the publicly supported school systems.

Research. Representatives of two home and school associations and an association of elementary school principals spoke to us about the necessity of educational research. The elementary principals issued a strong call for an extensive research program. They saw it as a pressing need, involving the hiring of the best people with the best ideas and at some cost. They noted that while there have been some promising beginnings, nevertheless to date very little financial priority has been given to research needs. They admit that the public in Saskatoon is not presently school research-oriented, and that education here is much needed.

Among the principles postulated by this group were the following:

1. The status quo is unacceptable.
2. Planning only on the basis of past experiences and planning which proceeds without adequate knowledge is inane.
3. Without a design for local research and change we will have irresponsible anarchy.
4. The most effective research in terms of meeting present and future needs will have the following characteristics:
   (a) it will have as its origin a recognition of pupil needs;
   (b) it will be developmental, decision-oriented, evaluative, and cyclical in nature;
   (c) it will take place within a specific school or a specific department or division of a school;
   (d) it will frequently involve students, parents, teachers,

administrators and consultants in substantive fields of knowledge, in group consultation and group decision making.

. . . .

6. The school system must have as part of its research design the pursual of a limited number of distinctive educational alternatives in depth.

7. There must be developed within the system an attitude that a certain degree of risk-taking is the price of eventual success and a corresponding desire to cushion failure for those who depart from the status quo.

8. Financial and human resources for local research must be allocated to schools on the basis of commitment by the staff to a precisely described and well-planned research design.

. . . .

10. To facilitate the co-ordination of research activities within the school system there should be attached to the office of the Director of Instruction, a well qualified research assistant.

. . . .

RESULTS FROM THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY - ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT ISSUES

"Grade One is early enough to start school."

68% agree

"Teachers of grade I and II need more professional qualifications than teachers of higher public school grades."

57% agree

"The school leaving age should be higher."

33% agree

"Schools should be used as community centres."

84% agree

"School buildings must be open for use by the public when the students are not there."

64% agree

"School libraries should be open before and after school, at lunch time, and on Saturdays."

81% agree

"There should be a lot of small schools instead of a few large ones."

49% agree

"There's too much fancy equipment in schools."

21% agree

"The high school should be in the same building as the elementary school."

11% agree

"I'm interested in going to School Board Meetings."

61% agree

"I trust the judgment of the school board members."

65% agree

"The school board members do a very good job."

71% agree

"All the school board is interested in is finances."

41% agree

"They should cut some of the frills and reduce taxes."

54% agree

"All school buildings should be identical throughout Saskatoon."

24% agree

"People with no children at school should not pay school taxes."

32% agree

"People should pay school taxes according to the number of children they have in school."

29% agree

SUMMARY - ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT ISSUES

1. A majority of the citizens responding stressed the importance of early education. Paramount importance was placed on the quality of education in Division I. Of great importance, but of lower priority than Division I, was a universally available kindergarten under the direction of publicly-supported systems.

2. There is a general concern that class size be kept as small as possible, especially in Division I.

3. It is considered important that all schools have adequate, well-stocked resource centres with trained personnel in charge, and that these centres be open outside school hours.

4. There is a strong feeling that school facilities should be available outside school hours for more extensive community use.

5. There is a desire for more publicity concerning school boards' policies and decisions, and the reasoning behind them.

6. Citizens ask for greater accessibility to school board meetings, and a prior knowledge of agenda.

7. Economies should be sought in construction and building costs rather than in the quality of the instructional program. A number are prepared for higher taxes if it really means a higher standard of education for their children.

8. If more money for education is required, the majority would like it raised on the basis of ability to pay.

9. Some underlined the necessity for extensive educational research, with a definite focus on the local level.

G. PUBLIC ATTITUDE SURVEY - WHERE YOUTH DIFFERED

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The following comparison will show those areas where the responses of the young people surveyed differ from those of the Saskatoon sample. Shown here are only those statements which drew a different response to the magnitude of plus or minus 10%. It is important to note here that the responses of the young people are included in the Saskatoon sample used throughout this report:

	Young People	Saskatoon
"I'd keep the school running just the way they are if I had my way."	26% agree	39% agree
"Parents should be able to send children to any school they want."	88% agree	72% agree
"The schools are preparing the students well for life after they leave school."	41% agree	52% agree
"There's not enough emphasis placed on teaching the three R's in the elementary school (Grades 1 to 8)."	36% agree	52% agree
"Teachers have too many bosses."	56% agree	42% agree
"Schools tend to be run for the educators rather than for those being educated."	64% agree	50% agree
"Too many teachers just try to fill a student's head with facts."	81% agree	60% agree
"A teacher should <u>not</u> be given the freedom to decide on <u>what</u> he or she is to teach."	20% agree	43% agree

Young People	Saskatoon
"Teachers tend to rely too much on school text books."	
72% agree	62% agree
"In the classroom, encouraging competition among students is a good thing."	
44% agree	70% agree
"The guidance counsellor should not have to teach as well."	
75% agree	63% agree
"There are a lot of unnecessary regulations in schools."	
77% agree	49% agree
"Schools are unfair to students."	
31% agree	21% agree
"Students have too much freedom."	
11% agree	41% agree
"There is not enough discipline in the schools."	
18% agree	47% agree
"Boys in school should be made to have their hair short."	
6% agree	40% agree
"Students should be allowed to smoke in classrooms if they want to."	
32% agree	11% agree
"High school students should be allowed to choose their own curriculum."	
93% agree	73% agree
"There should be no compulsory subjects in high school."	
59% agree	32% agree
"Most students enjoy going to school."	
60% agree	78% agree

Young People	Saskatoon
"Senior high school students should have a say in the running of the school."	
84% agree	57% agree
"The principal only meets the student when the student has done something wrong."	
71% agree	49% agree
"It's a good idea to have students going to school in shifts."	
49% agree	37% agree
"Parents should have the opportunity to meet their child's teacher early in the first term."	
83% agree	95% agree
"The only time the school contacts parents is when there is something wrong."	
83% agree	62% agree
"Parents should be allowed to observe in the classrooms."	
57% agree	69% agree
"Any decision to be made about a student's curriculum or course should be a joint one of the student, the teacher and the parent."	
76% agree	88% agree
"Parents should be prepared to put in time on behalf of their child's school."	
68% agree	85% agree
"Grade one is early enough to start school."	
78% agree	68% agree
"There should be a lot of small schools instead of a few large ones."	
62% agree	49% agree
"There's too much fancy equipment in schools."	
11% agree	21% agree

Young People	Saskatoon
"I'm interested in going to school board meetings."	
45% agree	61% agree
"I trust the judgment of the school board members."	
45% agree	65% agree
"The school board members do a very good job."	
47% agree	71% agree
"All the school board is interested in is finances."	
54% agree	41% agree
"People with no children at school should not pay school taxes."	
58% agree	32% agree
"People should pay taxes according to the number of children they have in school."	
48% agree	29% agree

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Before setting forth a series of recommendations there are some observations we wish to make.

We have been asked on many occasions, individually and collectively, what can be expected to result from this Report. We have met our share of doubters who have suggested that, like so many commission reports of the past, this volume will simply be another gatherer of dust. Representative of inquiries made to us were the following three questions from the public meetings:

> Now what I would like to ask is, how are some of these marvelous suggestions going to be implemented? . . . What I am in fact saying is there has got to be some way of putting these wonderful suggestions into play beyond just saying 'yes, let's do it'. Now does anybody have a concrete suggestion? Who can handle this sort of thing? I don't know.

> First, I'd like to ask a question of the Inquiry. I think this situation is really great. I think there are a lot of good ideas and I was wondering what happens after you go to the next step; do you make recommendations or do you have some other sort of power?

> What effect will your recommendations have on the future of education in Saskatoon?

On each occasion that we have answered questions such as these we have been so bold as to sound an optimistic note. We have done so because we consider our three sponsors to be very concerned about educational progress in our City. Many Saskatonians would agree with our assessment. In the public attitude survey we frequently noted such comments as "they are not dwelling on old ways of doing things".

A written communication from one of our sponsors proposed a follow-up calendar for the utilization of this report:

Early 1973

Public study and discussion of the Report.

Mid 1973

Saskatoon Conference on Education to be convened by the Boards of Education in co-operation with the Saskatoon Teachers' Association. This Conference would serve as a combination of public study and reaction to the Report.

Late 1973

White papers on education. Produced by the Boards of Education outlining their long-term plans for action.

(Dates have been revised to correspond with the date of delivery of this Report).

We challenge our sponsors to follow through. Our "taking of the pulse" indicates that a receptive public awaits their actions.

Another observation relates to money. Unquestionably money is a factor in a number of the recommendations which follow. We have already set forth our findings as to both sources and limits of taxation. While these findings indicate some limited space within which to maneuver, we believe our sponsors will be forced to consider the growing opinion that property tax has reached its limit, and that the entire tax burden is nearing the limit. Thus, there must be a search for economies throughout the entire educational structure.

We have listed our recommendations in the general sequence of our "findings". The establishment of priorities in implementing these recommendations we leave to our sponsors and their plans for the future. The list is as follows:

1. Greater freedom of choice should be provided to parents in the selection of schools, with adequate administrative regulations governing this selection. Some schools should be developed with distinct programs so that children may avail themselves of alternatives within a system. Principals should play a key role in this matter.

2. The summer vacation period should be retained.

3. The semester system for secondary schools should be retained, but the alternative of the regular school year should be available in the City.

4. Means must be found to strengthen the competence of students in mathematics, reading, and in spoken and written English. Concerning strengthening of English: the addition of more reading consultants with remedial expertise is one means; the use of volunteers and paid teacher assistants (preferably with degrees in English) to help Language Arts and English teachers is another means; a reduction in numbers of students assigned to the composition teacher is probably the most important means.

5. More school or teacher aides should be hired to do non-teaching tasks in every grade. An adequate job description for them should be defined.

6. Qualified teachers should be available for each subject. The practice of hiring itinerant music, art and French teachers is preferable to having less qualified teachers from regular classrooms teach these subjects.

7. The public school board should make French instruction in Division III (years 7 and 8) available in all elementary schools as soon as possible.

8. More emphasis should be given at elementary and secondary levels to Canadian studies, including geography, history, Government and

literature.

9. Schools should provide guidelines for source material in interest areas students might wish to study which are not covered in the school's curriculum.

10. The required number of credits in each high school year should be raised to eight; students should be allowed to register for courses according to their greatest personal capacity.

11. The present level of board support for Driver Education is adequate. Teachers and principals should be encouraged to free students whenever possible during spare periods to facilitate efficient and economical operation of the program.

12. Accurate knowledge about the body, its functions and how to care for it should be part of general education. Meaningful courses in health education and sex education should be offered at the appropriate levels.

13. Physical Education:

(a) Boards should make known to the public the full cost of inter-collegiate sports. They should appraise these costs to determine whether they can be considered justified expenditures.

(b) More attention should be paid to carry-over sports in the years 9 and 10 programs, in that these are usually the only years in high school when most students take physical education.

(c) Emphasis in physical education should now be directed to improving programs at elementary levels.

14. The Public Board of Education should complete its evaluation of special classes for the "academically-talented" and make

available to the public its findings.

15. The necessary psychiatrists, psychologists, reading consultants, speech therapists and social workers should be made available to the regular teachers and schools to enable them to cope with the social, emotional, and learning problems they encounter and are expected to deal with. Provincial Departments of Health, Social Services and Education should share the costs of providing these services.

16. Consideration should be given by the boards to using the services of the Radius Tutoring Project. Its feasibility as a supplement to the regular school program might be considered for those students for whom attendance at regular high schools is not practicable. Operating costs must not be higher per student than in regular schools.

17. Boards should move towards the creation of an "Employment Council", whose main purpose would be to help students with "on-the-job" education.

18. Special attention must be given to the hiring and supervision of teaching staff in Division I to ensure that in these crucial formative years the quality of teaching is the best attainable. Where possible only experienced teachers should be permitted to teach here.

19. A screening process should be adopted to ensure as far as possible that those being accepted into the teaching profession have an interest in and a concern for the welfare of the individual student, as well as an ability to communicate with the student and challenge him to work to his potential.

20. Our three sponsors should take the intiative in bringing about a re-appraisal of the teacher-training program in the Province to

ensure up-to-date course content and thorough training.

21. Principals should assume an effective role in the evaluation of staff members for purposes of tenure. (This would require the principals to negotiate directly with the Board concerning their remuneration and conditions of employment. Staff teachers, concerning whom the principals must give realistic and fearless appraisals on performance, should not be negotiating principals' salaries with the Board.) High school principals should make their decisions about tenure in consultation with staff department heads and should draw on senior student opinion. Principals' appraisals should form the basis for the following:

(a) the first granting of tenure. If the present two year statutory period is found to be too short a time to arrive at a conclusive appraisal, the period should be extended. There is reason to believe that in the present system of almost non-appraisal, two years is too short a period.

(b) the re-assessment every five years of tenure previously granted. If the appraisal showed a "resting-on-laurels" attitude or some other inadequacy, a "hearing" procedure would be invoked to investigate, with the investigating body having the power to terminate tenure.

This procedure is supportive of the principle, to which all surely subscribe, that schools exist for the students. Further, its adoption should end the recurring demand for a merit pay system, because the likelihood of a weak teacher being retained would be greatly diminished; only competent teachers would remain.

22. Outstanding classroom teachers should be given special recognition so that they will not feel compelled to seek administrative positions. The rewards could include one or more of the following: the assistance of a classroom aide; a reduced workload to provide for greater depth in preparation, and a smaller class enrolment.

23. Division III teachers should meet as a unit to share information and discuss ideas concerning course content and methods of teaching, in order that there may be greater familiarity in the ninth grade with programs presented in the seventh and eighth grades.

24. Thorough research and testing should be completed before new teaching methods and procedures are adopted generally by the school systems.

25. Where changes in teaching methods are to be introduced an active communication system between school and home must be established in order that there will be a clear understanding about the form the change will take and the reasons for implementing it.

26. A reappraisal of the usefulness of "the open classroom" method should be carried out and if a decision is made to continue with its use the advantages and expectations to be derived from this method should be carefully explained to interested parents.

27. Parents of a child who is capable of acceleration should be given the alternative of an enriched program for their child.

28. In evaluating a student's progress emphasis should be on his performance according to his abilities, with some indication of his standing in relation to the rest of the class.

29. Sufficient numbers of guidance counsellors must be employed in our high school systems to meet the increasing need.

30. Guidance counselling should be expanded in the elementary schools.

31. A method of frequent assessment must be developed to ensure that guidance counsellors remain well-suited for their work and in tune with youth. The field is too important to allow for any inadequacy or mediocrity.

32. A thorough reassessment of the specialized training needed for the guidance counsellor should be made. Training should include courses in the field of social work.

33. Student Representative Councils: Means should be sought to create effective Student Representative Councils to voice student concerns, particularly at the high school level. Students must take an interest and a responsibility in designing suitable Councils. Better representation might be achieved through wider representation of the Division IV classes, through the removal of the requirement of a specific academic standing for eligibility, or through election campaigns featuring more frequent discussion of issues by the candidates. If the executive of a high school Student Representative Council wish to attain serious and worthwhile involvement, they must be prepared to hear and act on student concerns or complaints. The executive must be given the power to present a student's concern to the school principal. If the decision of the principal is unacceptable the executive must be empowered to present the concern to an independent body whose opinion would be passed on to the appropriate board of education. It is suggested that the Citizen's Advisory Committee might provide this service. Further, the S.R.C. should meet with the principal and with parents to make corporate decisions on matters of student rights, responsibilities and behavior within the guidelines provided by the board. Finally, the S.R.C. should delegate the planning of school social functions to a committee of interested students.

34. Means must be found for teachers to better inform parents about the education of their children:

(a) Parent-teacher Interviews should be continued and parents should be made aware that they can request a meeting with teachers when necessary;

(b) Reporting of a student's progress should be done through a combination of the parent-teacher interview and a written document. The written document must be clear to the parents; how to interpret this report card should be discussed at the first parent-teacher interview;

(c) Classroom visitation by parents should be encouraged.

(d) Elementary teachers should arrange to meet with parents of their students early in the year. A room meeting to discuss courses, content, teaching methods, special projects, and reporting methods would be beneficial.

35. The Board(s) should authorize schools to utilize parents and other interested citizens as volunteer assistants. Parents should be encouraged to volunteer their services to the school, particularly in areas where their special knowledge, training, or talent can be put to effective use.

36. Home and School Associations should be consulted as part of the decision-making process in both local and district school matters. To perform this function, the meetings of the Associations must be times of serious learning. Responsibility for creating this renewed Home and School Association should rest initially with the principal and staff of the local school.

37. The Separate Board of Education should establish a

Citizen's Advisory Committee. These Advisory Committees to the two boards could then assume the following responsibilities:

(a) To act as a body to which individual parents or Home and School Associations may bring their concerns about the education of their children;

(b) To act as a body to which Student Representative Councils may bring their concerns as noted above under recommendation 31;

(c) To act as another "sounding board" for School Boards in the establishment of school policies and procedures. In this way the public opinion research begun by the Citizen's School Inquiry could be continued.

38. In view of the present earlier entry policy of the school systems (at age five after testing), the need for publicly-supported kindergarten programs is diminishing. We recommend:

(a) an optional school starting age of five years (consultation services should be available for parents who wish assistance in determining readiness).

(b) the revision of Division I, year one to include the atmosphere and special characteristics of the present kindergarten for the first four months. The child could be introduced to the full school day gradually. This plan might require a change in the planning of Division I, but when the repetition now present in kindergarten and year I has been removed, the problem should not be unduly difficult.

(c) the institution of testing programs for pre-schoolers, to detect severe mental, emotional, and learning problems. We further recommend the institution of special centres (sponsored jointly by the Departments of Health, Social Service, and Education) to begin remedial work with those pre-schoolers for whom testing has shown special needs.

The inevitable question is, what happens at the other end of the twelve years when students are academically prepared for University, but may lack real maturity. We are in favour of promoting the option of the year out after grade twelve, during which experience with reality could assist in speeding up the maturing process for this group. It is suggested that for some this year might be spent in the labor force, or in volunteer social action, or in travel, or in further academic preparation for specific post-secondary courses.

39. In comparison with all other regular classes, Division I classes must have the fewest number of students.

40. School libraries should remain open outside of school hours, and students should feel free to use them at these times. Parent volunteers should be encouraged to assist with staffing.

41. There should be in-service training of all teachers in the use of libraries and other resource materials.

42. An in-depth study should be made jointly by the boards of education and the parks and recreation department of the City, with the object of finding ways of better sharing the present resources of each.

43. School boards should consider preparing information brochures which would be made available to Saskatoon parents. These brochures should outline such matters as school board policies and procedures, and the variety of classes offered throughout the Saskatoon school systems.

44. School boards should attempt to publicize the location of their meetings, the nature of discussions to be held, and the decisions made at previous board meetings.

45. Every board member, administrator, and teacher shares the

responsibility of seeking economies in our schools. If, despite these efforts, more money is required to develop our educational system, boards should mainly seek increased grants from the Provincial Government, who control a variety of tax sources.

46. Boards must consider research on the local level as an essential ingredient for the maintenance of quality education.

47. Boards should operate on the principle that the restricting of freedom, whether for the principal, teacher or student, must always be justifiable.